

VIRGINIA MIDDLETON'S "INSIDE STORY OF A STAGE CAREER"  
AND A COMPLETE NOVEL BY W.B.M. FERGUSON THIS ISSUE

# SMITH'S

## MAGAZINE

NOV., 1909

15 CENTS



ILLUSTRATIONS,  
AND  
STORIES BY

24 PORTRAITS  
STAGE  
FAVORITES

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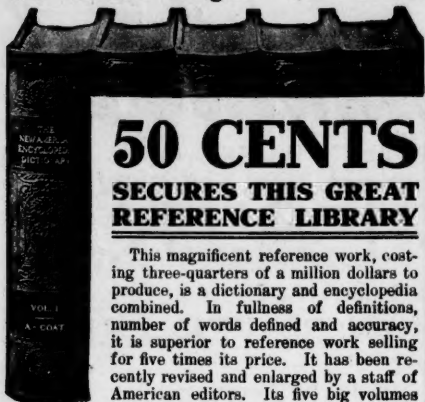
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Smith's 11-09

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Vol. X

No. 2

# SMITH'S MAGAZINE

A PUBLICATION FOR THE HOME

NOVEMBER

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1909

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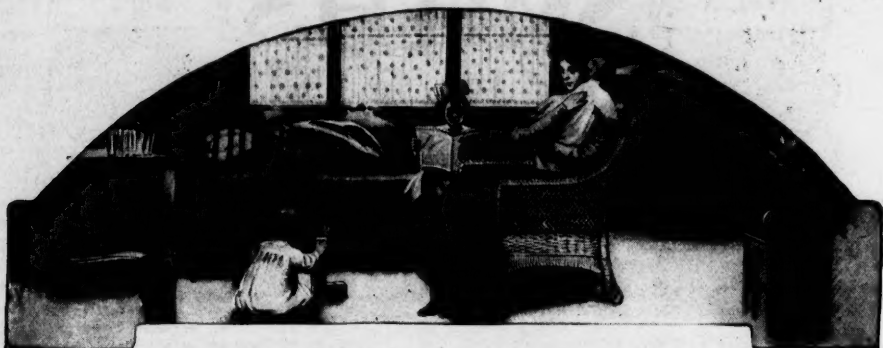
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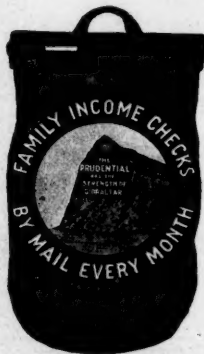
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# SMITH'S MAGAZINE

VOLUME 10

NOVEMBER, 1909

NUMBER 2

PHOTOGRAPHIC ART STUDIES  
of STAGE FAVORITES



MISS MARY BOLAND  
LEADING WOMAN WITH JOHN DREW



MISS ETHEL BARRYMORE  
In "Mid Channel"

Photo by Moffet, Chicago





MISS MABEL FRENEYEAR  
In "The Only Law"

Photo by White, N. Y.



MISS ELSIE JANIS  
In "The Fair Co-Ed"

Photo by M. Hett, Chicago



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MISS LOUISE DRESSER  
In vaudeville



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MISS GRACE DREW  
In "The Land of Nod"





MISS DELLA FOX  
In vaudeville

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Photo by Bangs, N. Y.

MISS DELLA FOX  
In vaudeville

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MISS SALLIE FISHER  
Will appear in a new musical comedy

Photo by Moffett, Chicago.









MISS NANCE GWYN  
In vaudeville

Photo by Bangs, N. Y.

VOYAGE  
XI



MLLE. LALA SELBINI  
In vaudeville

Photo by Moreau, Philadelphia.



MISS ANNETTE KELLERMAN  
In vaudeville

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MISS JANE OAKER  
In "The Coast of Chance"

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Will appear in a new play

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MISS HEDWIG REICHER  
In "On the Eve"

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In "On the Eve"

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MISS DORIS HARDY  
With Mrs. Leslie Carter-Payne

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MISS BLANCHE BENDER  
In "The Henrietta"

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MISS LUCY WESTON  
In "The Candy Shop"

Photo by Moffett, Chicago.



MISS ESTHER BRUNETTE  
In "The Candy Shop"

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MME. MARISKA-ALDRICH  
Prima donna Metropolitan Opera  
Company

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# WINTER'S WIFE

W.B.M. Ferguson



ILLUSTRATED BY R. EMMETT OWEN

BUT there are worse positions than that," said Mrs. Winter, slowly waving the peacock fan. "Oh, yes, much worse positions than hers."

"Well, I dare say any one could even become accustomed to hanging," replied the other. "No condition is so bad but that it can be worse. However, I wouldn't care to be in Emily's shoes. Think of the disgrace; the chorus of 'I told you sos' from all the old cats who think if a person does happen to consult her own wishes and makes a runaway marriage that a scandal must surely follow. They always said Emily and Jack wouldn't live together for more than three years. If only our set were fashionable enough to look upon divorce as an asset instead of a disgrace! And then there is the man, my dear. No one knows the identity of the co-respondent. Mr. Challoner, you know, is so funny in many ways, and I understand no statutory grounds will be mentioned, but merely the technical one of abandon-

ment, Emily offering no defense. Mrs. Van Reifensdorfer is my authority for all this, and you know there is precious little she can't ferret out. She is positively sick with disappointment at not knowing the identity of the co-respondent."

"If the Challoners had owned the blessing of living in a large city instead of this little sink hole of gossip, this never would have occurred," replied Mrs. Winter.

"Now, my dear, are you sure? Don't you think that as a born-and-bred New Yorker your natural contempt for suburban towns——"

"It is not that at all, Mrs. De Witt. You know I have learned to love this town. God meant it for paradise, but the women—yes, the women, and not the men—have turned it into the other place. The Challoners' trouble is but a sample of the dissension caused by meddling hands and venomous tongues. You, and perhaps one or two others, out of all my acquaintances are, I have

found, the only ones to whom I can talk frankly and fearlessly. The rest—why, an hour later when one's words come back one wouldn't recognize them. I suppose the town is so comparatively small, and there are so few interests, that we live on one another."

"Well, we wish to know what *you* are going to do about Emily and Jack," said the other. "I said I would ask you without any further beating about the bush. You know that whatever you say goes—and our set makes public opinion. It is so difficult to know how to act. Both the Challoners are popular; we don't like to chose between them, and yet Emily is in the wrong and should be ostracized. And we can't invite them to the same house when they no longer live together; when she evidently prefers her mother's place to that of her husband. What, my dear, are *you* going to do? That is what we want to know. The Armory dance is but a week off, and I am busy with the lists now."

"I think the matter is very simple," replied Mrs. Winter. "We have no right to act as the Challoners' tribunal; we have no right to recognize that there may be a divorce——"

"May be? But, my dear, Mrs. Van Reifensdorfer positively says so, and the worst of it is that she is *always* right. Always!"

"Well, I refuse to believe it until it has been so decreed by the courts. Even then it will make no difference in my regard for the Challoners. I like them."

"But if there is a co-respondent?" breathed Mrs. De Witt.

"Well, what if there should be?" asked the other. "My house will be open to Emily, just the same. I think friendship should go deeper than the moral code. If this gossip is true, Emily will need a friend now—not when all the world is with her."

"You are awfully brave," enviously sighed the other. "I wish I had the courage to act as you do. You know if Mrs. Van Reifensdorfer is right—and she is *always* right—receiving Emily Challoner will be equivalent to flying in the face of Providence."

"By all means, then, let us fly," laughed her hostess. "We have such few opportunities to try our wings."

"It—it will be the greatest thing our set has ever done," exclaimed little Mrs. De Witt, with suppressed excitement. "My, won't Mrs. Van Reifensdorfer be scandalized? Won't it be a bomb-shell? I—I could almost wish there was a co-respondent, just so as we could demoralize the Old Guard. I only hope my courage will last. Somehow, when I'm with you I'm awfully brave, but when Mrs. Van Reifensdorfer and her Old Guard get after me and say, in that patronizing and infallible way: 'Of course, my dear, you couldn't think of doing *that*.' And, 'Of course, my dear, you will naturally do *this*,' I just cave in and say: 'Y-yes, of course,' though I don't mean it at all. Really, I'm a terrible coward, Mrs. Winter."

"I, too, used to be a daily victim of old public opinion," laughed the other. "But I got over it. There came a day when I wanted something very badly, and it was a case of the conventions or it—so I threw overboard the conventions. When that has been accomplished it is wonderful how little one cares for public opinion."

"Ah, but if we all did that, what a muddle there would be," sighed the other. "I suppose it all depends upon the sort of conscience one owns. I mean if we always know that we are doing the right thing. You, of course, would *always* do what was right; it comes to you instinctively, but to the rest of us——"

"Well, you make out the Challoners' invitations," briskly interrupted the other, "and, if you like, refer all malcontents to me. And just forget what you have heard concerning them."

"Too late, my dear. I'm sure Mrs. Van Reifensdorfer has spread it all over town. The papers will have it this evening; see if they don't. And you really think there could be worse positions than poor Emily's?"

Mrs. Winter arose and drew down the shade, screening the warm evening sun. She did not return to her seat, but stood by the mantelpiece, slowly

waving the peacock fan. "Yes," she said slowly, "I do. Emily should be thankful for much. Hers was a mutual love match; it is no matter if the match burned out, for the main thing is that it once burned. For three years she has lived. And, if another has now entered her life—why, then, it is love again."

"But the ethics involved," protested little Mrs. De Witt.

"I wasn't thinking of the ethics," said Mrs. Winter, and the peacock fan had now ceased waving. "Really, when one loves—I don't mean the average hum-drum love—ethics weigh but little."

"That is a dangerous doctrine, Mrs. Winter. I never heard you talk so strangely before. Surely you do not consider Emily justified; that she is in the right?"

"Right or wrong—what does it matter?" asked Winter's wife, restlessly pushing back her heavy hair. "I tell you when you have this complaint gnawing at your vitals, ethics don't weigh a particle. Doesn't the starving man seek bread; the cold, heat; the thirsty, water? Let me tell you that the demand of the soul can be infinitely greater than the need of the body."

"I'm sure I never felt that way," said little Mrs. De Witt, thinking of her good-natured, fat, and deady commonplace husband. "I have always imagined that the *grande passion* was an enjoyable lie of the novelists. Really, Tobias, good and all as he is, never even so much as made a shiver go down my spine—except when he insists upon eating with the assistance of his fingers. I would like to meet this *grande passion* just for once to see what it feels like."

"I don't think you would care to give all which it demands—and I wouldn't advise you."

"Why? Didn't you infer that no price was too great to pay?"

"Perhaps—if you win. But—what if you lose? You don't understand? Well, I will suppose a case in point. Suppose, for instance, that a girl loved a man so well that she made him marry her. Suppose she knew him so thor-

oughly that she knew she could rely upon his honor; knew that he would keep his word against the world. Suppose that it so happened that in fun he offered her his hand, and she, knowing it was only in fun, accepted—and held him to his promise."

"And—and he did not love her?"

"No, he did not love her, and she knew he did not. But she loved him—oh, how she loved him!—and she hoped, she prayed that he would learn to love her."

"Well?" said little Mrs. De Witt.

"Well, supposing they were married, and supposing that from then until now they were man and wife in—name only; outwardly the happiest, the best mated of couples; inwardly strangers—worse than strangers. And supposing, day by day, it was brought home to this girl in countless ways that where she had once owned the man's friendship and esteem, she now held his utter contempt—perhaps his dawning hatred; brought home in a thousand ways the realization of the wrong which she had done him; brought home the fact that, despite his principle, he was learning to love another; brought home the knowledge that she—she, the wife—had no right to interfere, to claim the protection of the law and of society. And yet, knowing all this, she would not give him his freedom, would not say: 'Go. I have wronged you. I have no claim upon you, either as wife or woman.' Would not because she *could* not. Because she would rather bear the torture of his indifference and contempt, the torture of the other woman's encroachment—would rather bear all this for the sake of bearing the empty title of wife, for the sake of being near him. Would rather see him taken from her by God, man, or the devil before she could voluntarily give him his freedom." The peacock fan now resumed its rhythmic sweep, and Mrs. Winter, her eyes upon it, added composedly: "That is the worse position of which I spoke. That is why I think Emily Challoner should be thankful for much."

"But it is quite an impossible situa-

tion," sighed little Mrs. De Witt, "though you told it so well that, for a moment, I thought it an authentic case. You are a great actress. You should have seen how your eyes smouldered and blazed; how you panted, shivered, grew white—I declare, it was every bit as good as Nazimova. Really! But no woman could ever stoop to the action you mention. Nothing is worth the loss of self-respect. And, for goodness sake, why didn't the poor man get a divorce, have the sham marriage annulled, even if he was fool enough to keep such a silly promise?"

"Ah, that is a part of the story I haven't composed as yet," said Mrs. Winter lightly.

"Oh, so it is merely a story?"

"Of course—merely a story. Sometimes, you know, plots become so troublesome that we must tell them to some one—just to get them out of our heads. Some one like you who won't insist upon knowing the end."

"Wouldn't it be funny if it occurred in real life?" exclaimed the other, preparing to leave. "I do wish," she added, "that we could coax you to join some of our societies and clubs. It would take you out more. And to think of there being a real author in the town—the only one—and her not being a member of our literary society."

"But I'm an acknowledged social failure," laughed Mrs. Winter. "I have no charm—nothing. Besides, writing occupies all my spare time."

"Yes, I declare you couldn't work harder if you were earning your own living." The other's lips tightened, and she stooped to open the hall door. "I tell you what you do need," added Mrs. De Witt, nodding and smiling mysteriously. "And I know you will be blessed, my dear. They are the greatest blessings in the world. I'm sure at times I would be absolutely lost but for my wee youngster."

Mrs. Winter flushed vividly, then paled. She did not reply, and in silence the two moved through the trimly kept grounds to the gate. There, Mrs. Van Reifensdorfer, bearing up

the avenue like a frigate under full sail, met them and halted.

"My dears," she exclaimed, after an effusive greeting, "what do you think? Positively the latest news. I just happened to meet the Challoners' maid, and they are *completely* estranged. And—and—oh, my dear Mrs. Winter, you really must do something at once. You must have that servant's mouth stopped. Such a talker! Such shocking things she says! I'm sure it's all over town. Of course none of us will believe it."

"Believe what, Mrs. Van Reifensdorfer?"

"Oh, I can't tell you. I really can't, Mrs. Winter. And yet I think it is your duty to know. The maid actually had the impudence to say that dear Mr. Winter—"

"My dear Mrs. Van Reifensdorfer," laughed Winter's wife, "I know what you are going to say. Really, the maid is quite right. I asked my husband to accompany Mrs. Challoner to the city this morning."

"Oh," said the other, breathing loudly. "I thought you didn't—that is, my dear, you are so young and unsophisticated that you really must accept an old woman's advice. Considering Mrs. Challoner's delicate position one cannot be too careful, and you really shouldn't permit that young and charming husband of yours—"

"Nonsense!" calmly interrupted Mrs. Winter, and so nicely that there was nothing at which even an old war horse could find exception. "By the way," she continued, "I am giving a little informal dinner party to-morrow night. Can you come, Mrs. Van Reifensdorfer?"

"Delighted, my dear. Of course you will have to omit the Challoners."

"Nonsense," said Mrs. Winter in the same happy vein. "Of course they will come."

"Mrs. Challoner?" exclaimed the other, visibly swelling.

Winter's wife nodded brightly. "Yes. Emily Challoner, you know."

Mrs. Van Reifensdorfer eyed her sharply, then inspected the meek little

Mrs. De Witt who only that morning had agreed that Mrs. Challoner should be treated with distinct frigidity.

"You have told Mrs. Winter everything about Mrs. Challoner?" she inquired ominously. "Everything?"

"Yes," said Mrs. De Witt, flushing with excitement, but strong in her borrowed courage. "We have decided that Emily is to be treated just exactly as if nothing had happened."

"Of course," added Mrs. Winter, nodding gayly. "The Challoners haven't said that they are going to be divorced, and, of course, no one will believe that they are until it happens—which it won't. It is the duty of all good people to see that it doesn't; and you being a thoroughly good person, Mrs. Van Reifensdorfer, are going to help us, aren't you? Of course you are. We aren't going to magnify any little misunderstanding or widen the breach, are we? Of course not. So come along to dinner to-morrow."

"H'm!" exclaimed the dowager, pursing her lips. "H'm! my dear, I'm afraid—"

"Nonsense. Of course you'll come," said Winter's wife, waving her hands as if to dissipate all sorrow and care.

But later, alone in her room, both sorrow and care enwrapped her like a shroud. So the mysterious "E" was Emily Challoner.

## II.

The plot of Mrs. Winter's story had happened a year previous to her coming to Verona, that pseudo-fashionable Long Island town which would have been scandalized had it known that its model married couple of the younger set were ghastly mummers and hypocrites.

Verona has money and some pretensions to an aristocracy, and to these the Winters had appealed. When they took the old Pell mansion on Summerfield Avenue, remodeling it at considerable expense, the moneyed set were satisfied, and when it was duly learned that Corliss Winter was maternally related to Stuveysant Pell—now resting peace-

fully in Old Trinity—the aristocracy, ceasing to turn up its nose, offered, instead, a prayer of thanksgiving. For the long-vacant Pell mansion had been the pet nightmare of the Verona aristocracy for years. Owning a commanding position in the most fashionable avenue, flanked by homes of the influential, cultured, and refined, there had been constant fear that it would be thrown on the market and bought in by a member of the abominable *nouveaux riche*. If for no other reason than that of saving its aesthetic sensibilities, Verona afforded the Winters a warm welcome, and this eventually ripened into sincere, hearty approval. Possessed of wealth without ostentation, culture without pedantry, and breeding without snobbery, they appeared the ideally mated couple, and as such quickly became factors, and finally leaders, in both the younger and older set. All this within a year—within sixteen months of their marriage. This was as sudden as it was strange, for Verona usually regarded newcomers with suspicion and misgiving, and those candidates for social honors were picked over and examined with no regard for time or their feelings before, their eligibility assured, being clasped to the Verona bosom. Even then the clasp process was neither impulsive nor hearty, but rather bespoke a mere guarded desire to view the candidate in juxtaposition.

But it had been otherwise with the Winters. Admiral Van Reifensdorfer, retired, had said to his wife: "I came up last night on the train with Corliss Winter. Have you called yet?"

"No, Terry, I have not. I am awaiting a verdict. The Joneses, you know, are their nearest neighbor, and they will tell me—"

"Fiddlesticks! Make your own verdict, Adèle; don't wait for other people's. I've told you that before; the Winters are all right. A nice, clean, reserved fellow, sensible, and experienced enough to meet a man of my age on my own ground, yet no rounder or fly-by-night. In short, a gentleman." And the admiral squared his shoulders as if to intimate that he was



the sole judge of those qualities which constitute that protean term.

"But his wife, my dear?" remonstrated Mrs. Van Reifensdorfer. "It is always the woman, you know, who decides a couple's social standing."

"I don't know, madam," retorted the ex-admiral, bristling like an old Irish terrier, which he not only resembled, but was. "Do you make my social standing? Fiddlesticks! A woman makes nothing but a mother and wife—and in many instances I could do that better myself. You will find Mrs. Winter all right. I know I've never met her, but her husband would marry none but the right sort." And he waved his arms as if the matter were settled.

And settled it was. Mrs. Van Reifensdorfer, in a skeptical, antagonistic mood, had called on Mrs. Winter and was greatly disappointed when she discovered nothing at which to take exception. She came to patronize, but left to praise.

"A charming girl," was her verdict. "It is quite safe to call. Of course she is a little too outspoken, but she means well. A little more social experience, a polishing here and rounding off there, and she will prove an acquisition. She possesses a truly superb contralto voice, and no little literary ability. I really think I will take her under my wing, for she really does remind me of what I once was like."

Thereupon Mrs. Van Reifensdorfer had proposed Mrs. Winter for the church choir, the select sewing circle—which, once a week, devoted itself to knitting wash rags for the heathen—and to the amateur theatrical and literary societies, all of which honors Mrs. Winter declined—declined without making enemies. In fact, it was neither her nor her husband's fault that Verona insisted upon taking them to its bosom. Perhaps because neither cared an iota for fashion, her votaries and dictators alike insisted upon making them members of their set. Winter had come to the town to forget, to bury his shame, to seek amid new surroundings a method of keeping from the world the fact that he had been deceived

into a marriage which was a libel on the term, a prostitution of the marital state—to keep from the world the fact that he had assumed bonds and obligations which he resented hourly, daily, yet which his pride and sense of honor prohibited him dissolving.

In a measure he felt that he had been to blame, for he had always preferred Ione Forrester to the exclusion of others, but he had always regarded her as a member of the family, for she had been his father's ward; and although he had sensed that his own paternal parent desired him ultimately to select Ione for his wife, he had treated the matter lightly, and decided, if marry he must, to consult no one but himself. Marriage, however, he had relegated to the very distant future, for he did not regard it with favor. Marriage interfered with one's career—for he told himself that one could travel more quickly than two—and as the Winters never were rich, the success of his worldly efforts meant more than mere æsthetic gratification.

With Ione he had more than once touched upon the subject of their fathers' wish regarding an ultimate union, and he had been gratified and relieved when she seemingly ridiculed the idea and agreed with him that it should in no way influence their choice; that his career was the first and only consideration, and that he must be careful to steer clear of all entangling alliances.

And then had come that awful day, momentous and tragic in more ways than one. It had been Saturday, and they had gone canoeing with a party of friends on the upper Hudson. They had gone ashore at Washington Point to eat luncheon and photograph the ruins of the old fort. He would always remember the most trivial detail of that expedition. In entering the canoe he had proffered his assistance, saying, with exaggerated chivalry: "Will you accept my hand?"

Standing above him on the shore, her eyes had flickered, widened, and grown dark, but he had been heedless of the warning.

"Does your heart go with it?" she



asked, her eyes now steady and direct.

And, captivated by the glory of the day and a hitherto unrecognized allurements in her manner and appearance, he answered in the same burlesque spirit: "Of course, *ma mie*. 'For better, for worse, to have and to hold until death do us part.'"

"Better, then. Oh, better, better, sweetheart," she cried in a smothered voice, and flung herself upon him, body, lips, and soul.

The canoe had capsized in shoal water, and with her arms still wound about his neck, he had somehow fought his way to the shore, and for a brief, maddening moment lost all sense of time and place in the fury of her embrace. Then he struggled free, and she lay panting, dead white, with closed eyes against his arm. Even then he had found a certain

pleasure in noting the peculiar warm, transparent pallor of her skin and the startling contrast lent by the black lashes and brows below the tangled wealth of russet-tinted hair. No, as had always been granted, Ione Forrester was not a flawless beauty, but she possessed—well, a certain magnetism which he had hitherto never suspected.

Shame-eyed and troubled, he had pushed her away, even with a certain roughness entirely foreign to his nature, and for a moment they stood confronting each other. He waited for her to speak, to laugh, in some manner, to save the situation, and he felt vaguely irritated when she remained as dumb as himself; remained with small, cold hands pressed tightly together; remained staring at him, a pe-



"Does your heart go with it?" she asked, her eyes now steady and direct.

culiar entreaty, hunger in her eyes—as a dog mutely seeks for a sign of its master's approval, as a child mutely pleads to know if it has pleased.

Then he had laughed rather foolishly, and to cover his embarrassment had said: "Don't look at me that way, Ione. Come, it isn't a crime to kiss or to be kissed, is it?"

But she made no reply, and in awkward silence he had emptied the water from the canoe, and in the same silence they had rejoined the company.

There he was ingeniously explaining their saturated condition when the girl interrupted. "It didn't happen that way at all," she said calmly. "The canoe upset because I threw myself upon Corry."

"Mercy, my dear, how you express

yourself!" exclaimed old Mrs. Biddle, the delinquent chaperon. "*Threw* yourself? What do you mean, child?"

Despite Winter's flaming cheeks and warning eyes, Ione passively added: "Corry asked me if I would marry him, and, of course, I said yes. I have been waiting for it so long that I just sort of jumped for joy. That's all. I didn't mean to upset the canoe, but then that doesn't matter a bit."

Thereupon a babel of congratulations, felicitations broke out, together with some secret masculine and feminine heart-burnings, and old Mrs. Biddle had said: "Of course, we always knew that you and Corry were made for each other, and that it was only a question of time until you became engaged, and I'm awfully proud and happy that the event occurred under my chaperonage. I tell you, they don't call me 'The Marrying Widow' for nothing, my dears."

And after a period of blank amazement—which was attributed to a state of newly won happiness which defied expression—Winter had emerged from a species of nightmare to find himself officially engaged to Ione Forrester. Neither then nor subsequently did he strive to publicly deny or break the engagement. In the first instance he was actuated by a blank stupefaction, together with a strong disinclination against humiliating Ione; subsequently this last became merged with the feelings of one who for pride's sake shuts his teeth against the confession that he has played the fool. He felt like one who, thinking he has been gambling in fun, has lost a fortune and then realized that the game was in deadly earnest, and that he would be expected to meet his obligations or forfeit his honor.

This estimate of his feelings was gained anteceding a talk with Ione. During the return journey he had said nothing on the subject, but once the house was reached he spoke out frankly:

"I hate to say this," he began, "but it's too serious a matter to let drift. The happiness of us both is at stake.

You must break the engagement, Ione. I'll leave it to you. Say—well, say anything. That I'm unworthy—or whatever you like."

"Why?" she asked calmly, and all hope of a possible madcap prank on her part died from his soul when he looked into her eyes.

"Why?" he echoed desperately. "Why don't you know it was all in fun? Haven't you always agreed that the foolish idea about our ultimately marrying did not bind us in any way? Can't you see— But of course you can; you must, Ione. You're only playing with me, aren't you? Just another one of your freakish humors. You know the whole thing was in fun."

"Was it in fun that you kissed me, Corry?"

"N—no. I don't know. That is, perhaps," he said sullenly, running fingers through his hair. "I didn't mean to. It came so suddenly. I never felt that way in all my life before—and I never will again," he finished doggedly.

"Yes, you will. I'll *make* you," she breathed, leaning back against the table and holding him with her eyes.

"Don't look at me like that," he said. "You *won't* make me. Hang it, don't be silly, Ione. What's the matter with you to-day? Surely you don't think that because a fellow happens to kiss a girl he is bound in honor to marry her?"

"You are the first man whom I have ever permitted to kiss me, Corry."

"Oh, come now," he laughed, more at ease. "They all say that."

Her eyes contracted, but she said composedly: "The first and the last. You are going to marry me, Corry."

"What?" he exclaimed, aghast.

She faced him, her eyes twin black diamonds in a snowdrift.

"Do you love any one else? Are you secretly pledged to any one else?" she asked.

"You know I'm not; but that has nothing to do with it."

"Then you might as well marry me as any one else," she replied calmly. "It will please my dead father; it will

please your living father—and it will please me.”

“But it won’t please *me*,” he burst out. Pushed to the wall he bulwarked himself defensively behind the mean truth. “I don’t love you, Ione; I never did, and never will—not in that way.”

“You will—you do love me, Corry,” she whispered.

“I will not, I do not, Ione. Honestly, I don’t. You knew I was merely in fun to-day. Do you know what you are doing? You are taking a mean, a despicable advantage of me, an advantage any woman would scorn to take. You knew I could not humiliate you before those cackling fools, but this farce has gone long enough, and I say you *must* break the engagement.”

“And I say I *won’t*.”

“What? Is it possible——”

“Quite possible. If it is broken you, and you only, will break it.”

“You know I can’t,” he cried. “I can’t with honor. I can’t lay the fault to you, expose you to all the innuendoes——”

“I know you can’t—not as the son of Andrew Jackson Winter. On the whole,” she added, laughing strangely, “don’t you think you are acting poorly as a son of that flower of chivalry—your father? Am I so revoltingly ugly, Corry? Look at me. Am I old, wrinkled, decayed; lacking in vigor, fire, grace, charm? Do I lack pedigree? Am I fat, unwieldy? Am I ignorant, illiterate, uncultured? Ah, yes, I am poor, poor as the old church mouse, but not—not spiritually. I can love. Yes, I can love. Come, Corry, inspect me critically and at leisure. My hair is all my own, and my teeth are as sound as my wind and heart. Mere vulgar physical attractions, you say? Ah, then, find my soul, Corry; find my soul, for I have one. Come, I am on the block, up for auction, and, really, I know one or two who would buy me in at my own figure, but, see, I offer all to you——”

“Stop!” he commanded sternly. “Where is your modesty, your dignity, your pride?”

“Gone, Corry. Gone with my heart,”

she said, nodding until her little head looked like a swaying marigold. “Gone with my heart, Corry. Please don’t prate to me about ‘other women.’ I’m not ‘other women.’ I’m only myself.”

“In all seriousness, and with a full realization of the consequences, you then desire our engagement to stand?” he asked gravely. “Knowing my feelings on the subject, you still desire to become my wife?”

“No. I want you to be my husband. I want just *you* for keeps.”

“Shameless,” he breathed. “Can’t you be serious?”

“I am serious,” she said meekly. “But—but don’t let us be *too* serious, Corry. I mean, can’t—can’t you cheer up just a little?”

He was so incensed that he laughed. Then a certain grim resignation, acceptance of his fate, came to him, and he bowed with all his father’s courtly chivalry and grace. “Then it is understood,” he said lightly, “that you have done me the honor to become my wife.”

“Ah, that is much better, Corry,” she said approvingly. “Done like a soldier! Really it—it won’t be as—as bad as the smallpox or storming a fort. I promise you it won’t. And—and now will you kiss me, Corry?”

“No, I won’t,” he said bluntly. “That is not in the agreement. You will have my name—nothing more.”

She winced as if struck; then her head came up daringly and she laughed, “We shall see, Corry,” she said confidently.

### III.

On the evening of Ione Forrester’s engagement, Colonel Andrew Jackson Winter suffered another stroke and was brought home in a dying condition. One hour later Corliss found himself, like Ione, an orphan. The old colonel’s last words had been addressed to his son. “Don’t let my present condition influence you,” he had said. “Don’t permit false sentiment to make you do a thing which you will afterward regret. You know how I have always hoped that you and Ione would ultimately become man and wife. I regard her as my own

daughter, and her welfare and happiness are as dear to me as are your own. Her father and I were very close to each other. She will be alone now. Yet do not marry her for any motive but that of reciprocal love; that is the only excuse for the marriage system. I have not previously said anything on this matter, for I wanted you both to find each other without my help. But I am going now, and if you have found happiness in each other, tell me, for it will make my leaving easier."

"I have asked Ione to marry me, and she has consented," said Corliss gravely.

"What?" cried the colonel, sitting up with evident excitement and joy. "Is it really true? Ione, you know—your uncle, Stuyvesant—"

Then had come a rush of blood, and Colonel Winter fell back upon the pillow, a grim, satisfied smile biting deeply into his withered cheeks. And so from the coma he had passed into death without regaining consciousness; without completing the fragmentary sentence. At the time, sorrow obliterated all knowledge of the words from Corliss' memory, but long afterward they sought and achieved resurrection; crawled like a loathly insect over the fluttering leaves of his slowly awakening love.

Any fugitive hopes of breaking his engagement were now finally dismissed, for he felt that he had given his word of honor to his father.

Immediately following Colonel Winter's demise had come the news of Stuyvesant Pell's death at Biarritz; a victim, it was said, of pleuro-pneumonia. Subsequent to this, arrived the astounding news that Corliss Winter was the chief beneficiary of the will; astounding, inasmuch as the Winters and "Old" Pell had never been intimate, had never even exchanged the common courtesies of relatives.

To Corliss, his maternal uncle had ever been a vague, nebulous fiction—like the ogre in the fairy story—whom he remembered, when, as a child, visiting upon one unpleasant occasion. The ogre had bluntly informed him that he

was possessor of "the damned Winter nose, sir, and all your father's vile pride to boot." He forgot the episode which called forth these observations, but perceiving that his attributes in some manner inflamed the ogre, he never made a second visit, and was gratified when, subsequently, his father, upholding him against his mother's wishes, had affirmed that he displayed excellent taste by not desiring to revisit the ogre. "For your brother, my dear," added Colonel Winter to his wife, "is not only an ass, but a rough, cruel ass. You know I have always said so."

Precisely why "the damned Winter nose and vile pride" should inflame his uncle, Corliss never learned, for when his mother died his father considered it a point of honor to cease from calling Stuyvesant Pell an ass or, in any way, in the presence of his son, disparaging him. In fact, until the day of his death, he had never mentioned the name of his brother-in-law, with the exception of one occasion, when Corliss achieved his majority. Then his father suggested that, if he so desired, he visit Stuyvesant Pell. "Your mother's brother and I have never been friends," he added grimly, "but that is no reason why you should support the feeling or continue the feud. Our mutual dislike is not based upon any sweeping disapproval of the other's moral character." But Corliss, acutely remembering the reflections cast upon his nose, had declined, and his "vile pride" revolted at the thought of being treated as a poor relation.

By his uncle's unexpected generosity, Corliss was raised from comparative poverty to comparative wealth. With an income of ten thousand a year and the house in Verona, clear of all incumbrances, his "career" became for the moment less insistent. If he thought that Ione, now that he was rich instead of poor, would express some natural sensitiveness and compunction regarding their engagement, he was disagreeably disappointed. She did not seem sensible of the wide disparity in their relative conditions, and

he finally abandoned all hope that she would ever feel or act like a normal woman.

While his father's poor affairs were being wound up, Corliss and Ione remained in the old home under the chaperonage of Miss Patience Winter, his aunt, and sole surviving relative, who had arrived from the South to attend the funeral. She was persuaded to remain for six months, and at the end of that time Corliss and Ione were quietly married and, in lieu of a honeymoon, came directly to the old Pell mansion in Verona. He had not consulted her regarding his plans, but if this unexpected move was a complete surprise she gave no sign.

"This will be our future home," he had said on their arrival. "In the eyes of the law and society, we are now one. You will find funds at the local bank, subject to your check. Those are for your personal expenses. The housekeeper will attend to the others. The servants have been in my father's family for a generation, and will not gossip. You may rely upon them. You are free to go and come as you choose, to act as you see fit, and are subject in no manner to my desires. I merely ask you to remember that you now bear my father's name, and to guide your future conduct by that knowledge. The maid will direct you to your apartments, which I hope will meet with your approval. Should you need me at any time, you will find me here." He waved his hand to a suite on the left. "And now, good night," he finished, bowing and opening the door for her.

But she did not move. Not until that moment, when the meaning of his words struck home, did the first inkling that she had lost come to her. She went quite white, and her eyes grew wide and dark with entreaty. She looked small, pitiful, infinitely childlike, strangely alone and forsaken, as she stood mutely questioning him, as she stood nervously tearing piecemeal the solitary lily of the valley which adorned her plain traveling dress.

"C—Corry—do you *hate me*?" she whispered.

"No," he said slowly. "But should I learn to love—then keep me from it."

"You mean—another woman?" she asked, colorless, with quivering lip.

"Yes," he said bluntly. "Good heavens," he burst out in fierce wrath, "what right have you to assume that martyred expression? Am I responsible for this glorious honeymoon? This royal homecoming? Do you think I don't feel the shame, the humiliation of it all? Haven't I lost my manhood, if I have kept my honor? Do you think you can command my love as well as my name?" Then, calmer: "You need not fear that I will in any way dishonor that name. You are my wife—if in name only—and I will rigidly observe the respect and honor due your title. Nor in any manner will you be humiliated. Privately and publicly we will be seemingly the most devoted of couples. More I can't give, for I would be violating nature. I don't mean to act the cad, but if you just place yourself in my position for a moment you will understand how I feel."

"I—I know. You are very good to me, Corry, much too good," she breathed. "I—I see what I have done. Somehow I thought—thought and hoped you had been mistaken; that—that you did love me—just a little. You seemed to that day in the canoe, and I thought you would feel that way again. I thought when you owned so much of me that I—— But I was wrong. I have done you a great injury—a great wrong. I have lost. Corry, I will go away now, and you can divorce me—or whatever they call it—just as soon as you like, and I will never trouble you any more."

"No," he said violently. "The thing is done. I cannot retract with honor, so that settles it."

"Then may I stay, Corry?"

"Stay? Yes, of course. I have decided that. Stay on the conditions I have named."

"Any conditions, Corry. Thank you. You are too good to me. I am glad it is settled, for I only want to be near you. Oh, I'll be so good, Corry, and I won't annoy you at all, or make you



feel ashamed of me. If only I may see you at breakfast and dinner. And—and when the other woman comes, Corry—the one you will learn to love—why, I'll just go away and you will never be bothered with me any more. But—but just let me stay until she comes."

"There never will be any other woman," he said sternly. "Don't attribute such a thought to me. Don't you think I have any honor?"

"Ah, but it isn't a question of honor," she said, nodding her small, golden head and smiling sadly. "That is what you don't understand. If you *love*, Corry— But some day you may understand."

He eyed her, perplexed and troubled. "I wish I could love you, Ione," he said.

"I wish you could, Corry," she answered simply. "But you never will. I don't blame you, for I'm not like other girls."

He sighed, rumpling his hair, then turned to the door.

"Good night, Ione."

"Good night, Corry."

For a long time she remained picking to pieces the now withered lily of the valley.

#### IV.

During the ensuing months of his marriage, Winter found another side to his wife's character which surprised him greatly. He thought the unexpected had ceased to happen, that he had accurately gauged her at last, and that nothing she now said or did could astonish him. In this he was mistaken, for instead of standing idly aside and permitting the housekeeper to run the domestic machinery, as Ione's meek acceptance of his conditions had implied, she assumed active and complete control, and, moreover, in the characteristic fashion which precluded all possibility of making enemies. She seemed a master at having her own way, while at the same time making friends with those whom she bent to her will. It was not long before Winter realized that the domestics, notwithstanding they had been in his father's family for

a generation, loved and served his wife as faithfully and loyally as they served him. This, and the evident liking evinced by the neighbors, he vaguely attributed to the borrowed respect lent by himself; Ione was his wife, and naturally was accorded the honor due one who held that position; accepted merely for his sake, upon his merits, not her own.

On the whole, however, his marriage had not proved so terrible as he had imagined, for Ione, true to her promise, never sought his society on her own volition or in any way interfered with his scheme of living. For the sake of appearance they breakfasted and dined together. With mechanical precision he left every morning for the city at eight, returning at six, and, in fact, but for a bitter resentment and sense of being wronged, which he carefully nursed, he was, on the whole, more contented and comfortable than when in his father's house; and his relations with Ione, if more formal, were almost on the same footing. Unconsciously he had always relied upon her, acting upon her suggestions while under the firm belief that they were his own, for he had not an abnormal gift of insight, foresight, or humor. His pride and conviction in the sovereignty and dominion of his sex was supreme, and the fact that his conception of honor had compelled him to do that which he resented, yield to a woman's will, galled him more than the actual result.

But when Emily Challoner entered his life he assured himself that the chains which technically bound him to Ione had commenced to bite into his soul. Passivity had vanished; the quiet acceptance of his fate, based upon material comforts, unrestricted liberty, and the knowledge that Ione, for once, was behaving like a decorous, sensible woman, gave place to the old active resentment—resentment against Ione, himself, and Jack Challoner.

Why had he found the "only woman" too late? Why was she fettered like himself? Why did his abominable sense of honor compel him to act such a barbarous burlesque upon



the marital state? Why had he ever entered it? And why should it eternally prevent him from ever claiming the "only woman"? For prevent him it would, because, although one cannot help loving, one can keep from confessing it when such confession means dishonor. And it would mean dishonor. No, however he might feel, he could not act but as the son of his father, and notwithstanding that Ione was his wife in name only, he could never return injury with injury, or in any way humiliate the woman whom he had sworn to cherish and protect.

Winter had held strictly to this agreement with himself, and if the Challoners were estranged it was none of his doing, for he had in no way violated the friendship of Jack Challoner. Such an action would have been impossible for a man of Winter's stamp, for, whatever his faults or shortcomings, he never sought to conceal or mitigate them, and if he sinned, he sinned openly in the light of day and in the sight of the populace. If he should eventually find that his attraction for Emily Challoner would not be denied, but proved stronger than the dictates of conscience and, moreover, that it was reciprocal, he would go to Jack Challoner and to Ione and lay the fact before them; state the naked truth. It bespoke a fine faith in self that he firmly believed that such a contingency would never arise; otherwise he would have left Verona, for, when assured that such a proceeding was necessary, he possessed the courage to run.

Meanwhile, he was playing with fire, and finding pleasure by so doing. Entirely certain that he could keep himself from being burned, he was more assured regarding the safety of Mrs. Challoner, for if he owned man's pride he lacked his vanity. Emily and he merely met on the footing of good friends, and they never passed a certain barrier; moreover, he never suspected that she knew what that barrier concealed or that his interest and dawning fascination were returned. Lulled to a state of false security, strong in self-faith, he enjoyed her society when-

ever legitimate opportunity afforded until the night of his wife's informal dinner party when his fancied security was shattered at one blow, and he awoke, too late, to a full realization of his danger.

Pleading a headache, Emily Challoner had forsaken the bridge table and sought the veranda, where Winter, obligingly piloted by the good Mrs. Van Reifensdorfer, subsequently found her. This evolution in her manoeuvre successfully accomplished, the portly dowager had diplomatically and gradually retreated, and taken up an objective point in the vacant dining room where, unobserved, she could watch the result of her efforts. In this, however, she was frustrated by her hostess who, possessing a remarkable, if unsuspected, ability for putting the cabalistic two and two together, pounced upon her and literally dragged her to the drawing-room.

"But, really, my dear," expostulated the dowager, "I like to sit in the dark alone. Please don't think you must entertain me. And I never liked bridge."

"But the admiral says you are a wonder at piquet," exclaimed Ione, "and I have always wanted to learn. You must teach me. You see, Mrs. Van Reifensdorfer, what your famous good nature leads you into, for I am not a bit afraid to ask you to oblige me."

"You can make any one oblige you, my dear," retorted the other, with concealed vexation and asperity, "just by the way you ask them. Or, rather, *make* them. But, of course, I will be delighted."

"Don't fib. You will be very undelighted," replied Winter's wife in her calm, frank way. "But gracefully doing something you dislike just shows how nice you are."

Inwardly groaning, for just at that moment the veranda looked delightfully potential, the dowager arose, but had not the strength to abandon her pleasant ambushade without first disclosing some of its advantages.

"Why, I declare, there is Mrs. De Witt— Why, no, it is Mrs. Challoner," she exclaimed in admirable as-



*"But if you two are going to flirt—and, of course, you are," she added playfully, "take a friendly warning regarding that dining-room window."*

tonishment, peering from the window. "See, my dear, there in that dark corner. What a lovely trysting place, with all that wistaria and honeysuckle. It positively makes me long to be sixteen again. Yet if Mrs. Challoner can try it, why not little me? For, of course, Emily is not quite so young as she dresses, poor dear! Why, there is some one with her, Mrs. Winter. Whom can it possibly be?"

"I can see no gentleman other than my husband," replied Ione, wrinkling her pretty brows. "There was no one with Emily when you and Mr. Winter joined her, was there?"

"N—no," said the other, abandoning her ambuscade in disorder. It was no fun laying traps for a horribly frank

woman of Mrs. Winter's type. Was she merely abnormally innocent and stupid, or was she diabolically clever? That was the question which had been puzzling the good Mrs. Van Reifensdorfer ever since she had known the other.

The ambuscade had been deserted none too soon, for at that precise moment Winter awoke from his fancied security. The conversation had languished, died an unnatural death, and as if by mutual consent Mrs. Challoner and he sat in the hush of the summer night, looking into each other's eyes. Without warning or preparation, a climax had suddenly come in their relations; in a twinkling the barrier had been swept away, and both gazed with

mingled fascination, wonder, and fear at that which was now revealed. Her lips were parted, her breath came hot and troubled, a duplicate of his own.

His eyes upon her own, he drew nearer, then started back as if suddenly aware of their mutual danger; but with his action Mrs. Challoner awoke, and impulsively, swiftly, as if armed with the right to claim her own, she seized him by the shoulders and drew his lips to hers. Then with the same celerity and impulsiveness they parted, and he arose, white and unstrung.

Thus they continued to regard each other. Not a word had been spoken. Gradually, insensibly they became aware of an alien presence, aware that Ione was standing very near to them. Had she seen? How long had she been there? Winter remained stricken dumb while Emily Challoner, making a supreme fight for self-control, finding that the facing of the situation had been left to her, arose to meet it. But for once she was at loss how to act, what to say, and it was with unspeakable relief that she heard Ione ask:

"Are you feeling any better, Emily? If so, won't you come in and play for us?"

Mrs. Challoner, unprepared to face the light, replied with forced composure: "May I stay just a little longer? I hate to give up all this," waving a hand at the glory of the sky. "Besides," she added, with the daring of the guilty, "you know I enjoy your husband's society."

"Every one does," replied Ione gayly, "and I wouldn't be your friend if you didn't. But if you two are going to flirt—and, of course, you are," she added playfully, "take a friendly warning regarding that dining-room window. You know, Corry, it is the only one that commands this corner. There are some people who do like to magnify the most innocent actions. Come only when you're ready, Emily, and don't permit Corry to become a nuisance." And nodding brightly, she retired.

"Corry," whispered Mrs. Challoner. "Corry, do you think she saw us?"

"I don't know," he said restlessly. "Come, let us go in."

"But is—that all?" she pleaded. "First come and sit here—just for a moment, Corry. Tell me what I've seen in your eyes for these many months. Tell me we have been intended for each other from the beginning of time. Tell me that you love me."

"I love you," he said harshly. "Yes, I love you."

"Kiss me, Corry."

"No; not until I have the right."

"My love gives you that right. Take me, Corry."

"Come, let us go in," he cried violently. Reluctantly, she obeyed.

When the company had gone and the servants were abed, Winter, without preamble, asked his wife: "How long were you standing there before you spoke to Mrs. Challoner and me?"

"If you mean did I see you kiss her—yes," said Ione simply.

He flushed, and commenced to pace the room. "I would have told you, in any case, Ione. Will you believe me when I say that it is the first time that such a thing ever happened between us? That never by word or gesture have——"

"Of course I believe you," she said.

"You are not angry?" he asked, regarding her with doubt, astonishment, and hope.

"No, I am not angry," she laughed. "Why should I be?"

"I—I don't know. I some way took it for granted you would be. You know that I love Mrs. Challoner?"

"I do not, Corry."

"You do—you must! I say I love her, and I have told her so. Otherwise I would not have kissed her."

"Once—you kissed me."

"That was different," he said doggedly. "I hate to say all this, but I must be frank with you, Ione. I thought what happened to-night would never happen, and I don't know how it did. I never thought Mrs. Challoner returned my—my love. I never thought it would prove too strong for me, overcome my conscience, but it has. You once said the other woman would

appear, and I said there never would be another, for I thought pride and honor could dictate my conduct. But I was wrong, Ione. I hate to say it—I do, indeed—but you and I must part. Our farce is played out. I have tried to stick to the finish—God knows I have—but I can't, I can't. I must take my freedom if you refuse to give it to me."

"If I thought you were mistaken, Corry, if I thought she did not truly love you, I would say: 'Take it—if you can.' I would fight her to the end—but I can't. I cannot blame her. I have seen from the first that she would win where I had lost, gain what I had never owned."

"You have not seen from the first," he said vehemently. "We were blind ourselves until to-night. Why, you have always been Emily's best friend."

She laughed, cradling hands behind head. "You don't know women, Corry, least of all your wife—in name only. What rights have I to fight for? Any woman has the privilege to bid for you, for you are an eligible bachelor, not a married man. Of course I did not try to keep you and Emily apart. Of what use was that? Why, instead I have helped you; even lied for you both against the gossip of the town. Do you think it is *her* happiness I consider? I care for no one's but your own. Do you think I wish to rob you of your birthright—the privilege of loving? No; I am here merely until you find the other woman—your birthright. Take your freedom? Why, I will give it gladly, willingly, and, if I may, help you all I can."

"You are very kind," he said abstractedly. "I didn't think you would see it in this light. I must go to Chalonner and tell him what I have told you. Of course I cannot again see Emily until she is, and I am, free."

"You won't say a word to Jack Chalonner," exclaimed Ione decisively. "Don't be silly, Corry. You know there is a rumor that they are estranged and, though I don't believe all I hear, I notice he didn't come to-night, and I believe Emily is staying at her mother's."

Don't you see the position in which you would place yourself? I believe you; that there has been nothing between you and Emily until to-night, but who else would?"

"Do you mean to infer," demanded Winter, white with anger, "that there has been any gossip about Emily and me? That it is my fault if the Chalonners never cared for each other? Why, I have never sought her society or seen her but on the most public occasions."

"It doesn't matter, Corry. There are evidently people in this town who are determined to link your and Emily's name together. Only yesterday some one learned of your accompanying her to the city, and I had to pretend that I had requested you to do so."

"Who was this person?"

"It doesn't matter. Leave her to me. Open enmity is poor policy, and she could pluck and eat you at leisure."

"I met Emily quite by accident," he said. "There was no previous arrangement. She happened to be going on the same train. That's all."

"I heard of it later—luckily before I was questioned," replied Ione in the same quiet voice. "You are away all day, and men don't hear the things which women do. Trust me in this matter, Corry, and I will arrange it all right. Meet Emily as often as you please; only be careful, for there are many dining-room windows in Verona, and you don't want to be mixed up in any divorce scandal."

"There won't be any scandal," he said irritably. "I say I won't claim Emily until she is as free as myself."

"U-m-m! Of course you have considered Mr. Chalonner's rights in this matter?"

Winter nodded. "Naturally, I would never have thought of encroaching upon them had he not renounced them long ago. I know Emily would seek her freedom in any case. I merely value what he has discarded. There is no wrong in that."

"Then let Emily seek her freedom," replied Ione, "and without your help, Corry. When that has been accom-

plished you will be at liberty to act with perfect honor and candor. In the meantime, say nothing to Mr. Challoner, and don't avoid Emily's society; that would but awaken suspicion. Please believe, Corry, that I can engineer this matter better than you, and I will do so to the best of my ability. We must consider your name as well as your happiness."

"Yes—yes, of course," he agreed. "Naturally I could not do anything dishonorable, anything that would smirch the name. That is why I would like to go to Challoner and state the truth. But perhaps, as I suggested, it would be best not to say anything."

"Of course, your suggestion is the best," replied Ione, disclaiming, as usual, all equity in his mental processes. "I will see Emily and talk the matter over with her."

Winter felt vaguely disturbed at her ready and seemingly philosophical acceptance of the situation.

## V.

"Well," said Challoner, "how are you getting on?"

"Fairly. Fairly," said his wife. "Do you know, he actually kissed me last night?"

"What?"

"Don't be angry," she returned, tapping his arm. "You must expect such things. They are part of the game."

"They're not. I don't like it. You must never permit it again. Never!"

"Fie!" she laughed. "Is it possible you have one solitary scruple——"

"Scruple be hanged, Em! I thought I could trust you. I thought you knew enough not to go too far."

"Ah, but human nature is so weak," she sighed. "And although Corry——"

"Corry? Do you call him *that*?"

"Of course. I admit this campaign has been hard—the hardest I ever entered—but, surely, you reflect upon my charms if you think I haven't even won past the prefix stage."

"Huh!" sniffed Challoner, seeking a cigarette. "Well, you can use the prefix when discussing him with me."

"Well, then, although Mr. Winter is such an insufferable prig—forever prating about his honor and name—he is good-looking, Jack, and he owns a certain attractiveness which charms. Don't laugh. I mean it. I admit that, aside from any financial consideration, I have found exhilaration in the chase. He was so sure of himself, so hard to hook, refusing every fly, although I could see that his mouth was watering all the time. He has such stupid ideas about honor and virtue."

"He's an ass," said Challoner, with conviction. "I've always said so. But for that little wife of his, every time he opens his mouth he'd put his foot in it. Don't make the mistake of thinking she's as innocent and stupid as people imagine. Their position in this town has been earned by her, even though he may be related to a hundred Pells. It is she for whom we must look out. In fact, aside from the money and the name, I don't see why she married him."

"I suppose for the same reason I married you—love."

"You *can* be sarcastic, Em. You know we were both done."

"Oh, of course," she replied, with a hard little laugh. "We must never forget that. But really, Corry—I mean Mr. Winter—is not such an ass as you imagine. One *could* love him. Deliberately seeking temptation is a dangerous game, and did it ever occur to you that some day *I* might become the victim? It's funny, isn't it? Last night, for instance, I felt very strangely, and I really don't think I was acting. It all came upon me so suddenly. When, as you say, one has been 'done,' the knowledge that some one cares for you—just for yourself—is very, very wonderful. You never thought I could be sentimental, did you?"

"That's no sentiment; it's asininity," he said coldly.

"Perhaps. But would it really make—make you angry, Jack, if I did care for Mr. Winter?"

"Oh, be sensible, Em. He's married, and so are you. If you and I can't have love, we'll have what's better—

money; if you behave yourself. You then at last have Winter where you want him? He'll do anything you say, and he thinks, like other fools, that you and I are estranged, may eventually be divorced?"

She nodded.

"Good!" exclaimed Challoner, patting her on the head as if she had been a faithful dog. "We can now put a deal through which will place us above this kind of business. Who knows but with all the money we want—for we only want a livable income, Em—that you and I may yet learn to love each other? What? Necessity, you know, puts a devil of a stopper on sentiment, and all that kind of thing."

"And necessity removed, you—you think you could learn to love me, Jack?"

"I'd try awfully hard. Honest! Do you think you could learn to care for me?"

"I—I think so, Jack."

"Well, let's try it, then. You've done a lot for me, Em. I don't think you could have done more if you really loved me. There's one thing I like about you; you're so loyal and I can rely upon you so thoroughly."

"Well," she said matter-of-factly, "we owe each other something for having been 'done.' We both need the money, don't we?"

"Yes, and we'll both get it. Then good-by to unpaid bills, and all that. But remember to keep your eye on Winter's wife."

"Oh, he tells her nothing of his affairs," she replied composedly. "He's entirely self-sufficient. She's only a girl. Like—like us, they don't care for each other. No doubt she knew he would come into the money, and he has found he could have done better."

"Well, then, if so, she knew more than any one here did," he dryly commented. "They always thought that 'Old' Pell and his relatives were hopelessly on the outs. However, it's a good thing for us that Winter came into the money."

While the Challoners were thus discussing the Winters, their own affairs

were being raked over by the good Mrs. Van Reifensdorfer, who owned a remarkable memory, her classified library relative to the personal histories of Verona's residents being unique even among similarly aspiring bibliophiles. She had always found Ione a poor audience, but on this occasion, the morning following Winter's confession, his wife had called upon the dowager, and in her own inimitable manner gradually brought the conversation to the Challoners, and so innocently that Mrs. Van Reifensdorfer firmly believed that she was leading instead of being led.

"Yes," she was now saying, "Mrs. Challoner—for I simply never could call her Emily—was a Carstairs. That is why she is universally received, for they, you know, are one of the oldest families and, naturally, as poor as Job.

"No one knows anything about Jack Challoner. He appeared at one of the Armory dances, and married Emily Carstairs the following spring. They said he had money, and she was supposed to be an heiress in embryo—the pet of her maternal aunt. But, dear me, when the old lady died it was found she had nothing—had lost it all in some wild speculation—and had been fooling her relatives all the time; living with the Carstairs for nothing. Wasn't it a good joke?"

"From the first I've suspected that the Challoners married for money, and that both got left. *She* certainly has nothing, and his supposed wealth never matured. I don't think they have a penny other than what he scrapes up by his political connections—he's a councilman, you know. Why, they owe everybody in town.

"And then, my dear, there has been some queer talk about the Challoners. I never like to repeat gossip, but they do say that more money has been lost in their house over cards than is really decent. And she has had so many 'affairs'—all with people of means. I don't for the world mean to say that he uses her beauty—for she is beautiful if nothing else—as a decoy, or that she is in any sense his jackal, or that they deliberately plan to make use of people,



but then, my dear, those who act in that manner leave themselves open to suspicion. I've always said that some day Mr. Challoner would regret throwing his wife so much in the society of other men, permitting her so much unrestricted liberty."

"Oh, Emily isn't the kind to abuse it," confidently dismissed Ione.

"My dear, you are positively the most loving, unsuspecting, and forgiving creature I have ever known," sighed Mrs. Van Reifensdorfer. "But don't let your good heart blind you to everything." And Ione pretended to be unaware what the eulogy insinuated.

On that same evening, Emily Challoner paid her dinner call, and during the usual exchange of friendly courtesies vainly sought some evidence of hostility in the manner of her hostess. Satisfied that the other was entirely ignorant of the veranda episode, she was completely dumfounded when Ione at length said: "Emily, I understand that you and Corry are in love with each other."

Mrs. Challoner laughed, then paled, as she found that Ione's eyes remained quite grave and unwavering. "Why—why, Ione, what can you mean? Of course I like Corry—"

"I said love, Emily."

"Why, this is ridiculous, absurd, Ione. What right have you to talk this way? I don't like that kind of jokes. Even supposing I did love Corry, no wife would come out pointblank—"

"I'm not like other wives, just as I'm not like other women," sighed Ione. "I can't help it if I'm not. What is the good of pretending to ignore things?"

"But—but this is terrible," expostulated Mrs. Challoner desperately. "You discuss the most alarming subjects so dispassionately. You—you upset all my philosophy. You calmly sit there and suggest that Corry and I love each other, and yet you are not angry." She laughed nervously. "Oh, I see you are joking, otherwise—"

"Otherwise I would forbid you the house?" suggested Ione. "But you see, I am not well-bred, Emily, and I never was. I just can't pretend to ig-

nore the subject, for it has passed that stage. You see, Corry told me that he loves you, and that you love him."

If Mrs. Challoner had been dumfounded she was now annihilated. "He—he never told you that," she breathed.

"Oh, but he did, Emily. Why not? Doesn't every husband confide in his wife? Of course he does. We have talked the whole matter over, and have decided that as he loves you better than me, and as you love him better than your husband, why, the only thing to be done is for you to quietly secure a divorce—"

Mrs. Challoner interrupted with a peal of laughter. "Really, Ione, you're grotesque," she gasped. "If you and Corry ever discussed such a question you are the most outlandish couple I've ever met. But, of course, this is merely one of your mad pranks. Do you resent my flirting with Corry, and perhaps—"

"I'm in earnest, Emily, and please believe that I want to help you and Corry all I can. Now, we don't want any unpleasant talk, so you will quietly secure your divorce on the grounds of incompatibility of temperament—or whatever they call it—and you—"

"But I don't wish a divorce!" exclaimed the other, now thoroughly angry. "How dare you suggest such a thing!"

"Oh, but you do, Emily; you know you do, and don't think of me in the least; don't hesitate on my account. Why, I'll help you to get one, and Jack will be only too willing to give you your freedom."

"Indeed! Who said so?" demanded the other, white with anger.

"Why, aren't you estranged, Emily? Just see how easy it will be for you I'll—"

"Mrs. Winter, you are unwarrantably intruding into my private affairs. For the sake of friendship, I have tried to listen to you with patience, but this absurdity has gone quite far enough. I don't believe Corry ever said he loved me, or that I loved him. Why, it's ridiculous. He has misinterpreted the attitude of a moment, misconstrued a mild



and harmless flirtation. By thinking otherwise, he is injuring my name. Surely you can see that. Why, if Jack ever learned of what you said——"

"Corry wants to tell him, but I thought we could arrange it without that," said Ione innocently.

"Tell Jack?" gasped Mrs. Challoner, aghast. "Are you insane, Ione?"

"Don't be angry, Emily, for I am only trying to help you all I can."

"You will help me by never saying such things again," replied the other, with compressed lips. "By never repeating a word of this ridiculous conversation to a soul. I suppose there's a joke somewhere, but I fail to see it. You are certainly the queerest person I've ever known."

"Then you don't love Corry, Emily?"

"No," almost shouted the other. "Of course I don't."

"I know it will be a terrible disappointment to Corry, but then we'll have to make the best of it," sighed Ione. "You aren't angry, Emily, because we thought you did?"

"I'm angry because for the moment I took you seriously," replied Mrs. Challoner, with a vexed laugh. "I sometimes forget that you are the only original Ione Winter. There, kiss me, and forgive me for getting so wrought up over your tomfooleries. I do believe you saw me kiss Corry last night, and wish to frighten me into behaving myself."

"Yes, I saw you, Emily; and he told me, too."

"I don't believe you, Ione. Never again will I believe a word you say. Never!"

Winter's wife shook her golden head and spread her little hands. "Why is it that people never will believe the truth?" she innocently asked.

"They will, my dear, when they hear it," replied the other, pinching her cheek, for Mrs. Challoner was quite herself again.

When Winter came home that night, Ione rehearsed her conversation with Emily Challoner. "I'm afraid I must have said something that made her angry," she finished meekly, "for she af-

firmed quite out and out that she didn't love you, Corry. Fancy any one not loving you. Why, it's absurd."

He crimsoned and glanced suspiciously at his wife, but she was bending intently over her sewing.

"Naturally no woman would confess to a man's wife that she loved him," he said irritably.

"I would," said Ione, without looking up.

"You would do anything that no other woman would do," he said. "That is understood as an inflexible rule. I was a fool to ever let you mention it to Emily. I had hoped you had said nothing, for I intended this morning telling you not to."

"But we had agreed on that, Corry."

"I know, Ione, I know. But somehow, when I came to think it over, I couldn't let you sacrifice your pride, place yourself in such a position, even to Emily. I have the same regard for your feelings as I would have for those of any member of my family."

"You are awfully good to me, Corry."

"Not at all," he said restlessly. "Please don't say that any more. It sort of—well, it's like sarcasm."

"Truly it's not, Corry. I mean it."

"The truth is, I'm so upset I don't know what I'm doing," he exclaimed, pacing the room. "Aside from all this, I have a big deal on that will mean a fortune." She offered no comment, and as usual the silence prompted further confidence. "You've always considered me a pretty stupid sort of business man, Ione, haven't you?"

"No, Corry, I haven't. You know I think there is no one so clever as you."

"Well, do you know, sometimes I have doubts of that," he replied ingenuously. "Of course I always ultimately see what is the right thing, but I'm not overquick. You wouldn't be apt to notice it, but it's true. However, in this instance, I saw my chance right away, and forgive me if I appear sort of cocky over it. There's a fortune in it! A fortune!"

In silence she bent over her sewing, while he continued to pace the room.



*"You've ruined me. Ruined me! I hope you are satisfied."*

"I knew it was only a question of time before I pulled off something big," he added. "Somehow, Ione, I find when I state a proposition to you that the very act of verbally thinking it over makes it clearer. You don't interrupt and suggest like other women. Would you mind if I stated this one?"

"Of course not. You know I would be very glad. Though I never can help you in any way, I like to pretend that I can."

"Well, it's this way," he began. "You know there's a big tract of land to the west of the railroad which, compared to the residential section, is valued very low, for you know the town isn't spreading that way, and property values, like the sun, are continually rising in the east while sinking in the west. This is no snapshot observation of my own, but is supported by every reputable real-estate operator in Verona whom I have taken the precaution to sound. They agree that the highest property values must always be to the east so long——"

"Of course," she interrupted. "No one would care to live across the railroad track, away from the water. No-

body but colored people live there, Corry."

"And that rapidly growing colored settlement—'nigger town'—is just the crux of the matter," exclaimed Winter, with a satisfied smile. "Ione, did it ever occur to you that property values fall wherever the foot of the negro has trodden? That by driving him out, restricting the nature and character of the tenant, values must inevitably rise?"

"N-no, Corry, I never thought of that. But could you make landlords do that? I thought they might prefer somebody to nobody. It seems to me that West Verona never would have become 'nigger town' if it had contained natural advantages which would appeal to the higher-class tenant. Of course I'm very ignorant, and this is merely the way it seems to me."

"Naturally you have not made a study of the subject as have I and certain others," he said indulgently. "These certain others are convinced that 'nigger town' is a serious menace to Verona, and that it may even spread to this section, for I understand there is a very active and resourceful colored

real-estate company in the field, and some landlords might sell out for a high figure. For instance, how would you like to have a colored boarding house right on this avenue? I'm not exaggerating, Ione. It has been done in other towns, and could be done here. You realize what it would mean? Well—and this is in the strictest confidence, to be breathed to no one—I have learned from an absolutely authoritative and reliable source that the city is to take the matter in hand. 'Nigger town' is to be bought up, and its heart converted into a public park, and thus for a comparatively small outlay the city can win back the original purchase price from those lots not converted to public use. These will be restricted and should bring a high figure, for they will face the park.

"In short, I have always held that there is no valid reason why West Verona should not be on a par with East Verona. It just so happened that the latter section was settled first, and people are like sheep, heedlessly following the bellwether. Long neglected, the west fell a prey to the undesirable class of tenant. Again, the inconvenience of crossing the railroad will be obviated, for the company is going to erect a bridge. This movement will not only raise values in West Verona, but secure a fixed standard for the entire town."

"And who is back of it?" asked Ione, intent with her sewing.

"The city," replied Winter. "Naturally, the project must be kept entirely secret, for otherwise West Verona property owners would raise prices to a prohibitive figure. You know when the municipal or national government wants a certain piece of land, it doesn't quibble about the price. Therefore West Verona must be secured quietly by many different, and outside, realty companies who will be acting secretly for the city."

"But it doesn't seem very secret, Corry, if you know it. If you possess the knowledge, anybody might, for you know you never paid any attention to the political or business interests of the

town, did you? I mean you're not in touch with the men who know local conditions."

"But men are not the only ones who know things," he replied, with a smile. "A certain channel of inside information is open to me which is closed to all others. It's absolutely authentic and reliable, for she has my interest at heart."

"Oh, so it's Mrs. Challoner, Corry?"

"Who said so?" he asked, puzzled and annoyed.

"Why, you did, Corry. What other 'she's' is there, who possesses inside information and has your interest at heart?"

"Well, I didn't mean to tell you, Ione; but now that it's out you may as well know. Of course this is strictly *entre nous*."

"Of course, Corry. You know I would keep faith with Mrs. Challoner just the same as with you. I suppose she learned this project from her husband?"

"Yes, but, naturally, inadvertently and indirectly; otherwise, although she doesn't care for Challoner, nor he for her, we couldn't make use of it. It would be dishonorable, sort of selling him out. Emily, you know, is the soul of honor."

"Yes, I know, Corry. And this isn't selling Mr. Challoner out?"

"No, of course not. It was Burdock, chairman of the board, who leaked. The Challoners have a party wire, and Emily, calling up Mrs. De Witt, heard Burdock talking with Challoner. Nothing was said that an outsider could have understood, but Emily is well posted on local affairs, for she is a very clever woman, Ione."

"Yes, she is, Corry."

"Well, she fathomed the scheme, and happened to mention it to me and, of course, without any suggestion on her part, I instantly saw the legitimate opportunity of making a good deal. It was mere business instinct, Ione."

"And what is it? I'm not very clever, you know."

"Why, don't you see?" he exclaimed. "I always thought you were rather

bright. Why, the thing to do is to buy up the land that is to be used for the park itself. The city will have acquired the other property, and will have to come to me for their park. I won't put on the screws, of course, but I'm entitled to the fair profit which is the legitimate reward of foresight and judgment. That's business, Ione."

"If it is business," she said, "why don't Mr. Challoner and his associates do the same? Haven't they better foresight and judgment?"

"Oh, you don't understand," he laughed. "They can't with honor. They have been elected to their offices, to positions of public trust, and their duty is to the city, not themselves. Their duty is to acquire that property as cheaply as they can, and if one of them took advantage of his knowledge he would be a grafter, a thief, and no fit associate for honest men. They can't do such a dishonorable thing."

"Well, neither can you, Corry."

"What do you mean? I am not committing a breach of trust. You know I'm incapable of such—"

"I know, but listen, Corry. Sometimes we do, only we use different words, don't we? You wouldn't take advantage of a private conversation, and isn't a public one just as sacred? It—it is like betraying Mr. Burdock and Mr. Challoner. If they are true to their trust, surely we—"

"They are being paid for being true to their trust," he interrupted irritably. "I'm not committing a breach of trust, for I don't hold any. What queer ideas of honor you have, Ione! You do things no woman could ever do, and yet quibble over this. Why, ten men out of ten would jump at this chance if they had the brains to see it. It's business, legitimate business."

"I don't like it, Corry. Please don't do it. Please don't. Why, we've all the money we want—"

"Yes, money I've inherited. But don't you think I've felt all along that I've been living on the stored-up labor of a dead man? Don't you think that that and my position at the office has

galled me? We're almost living at the rate of ten thousand a year, and yet I'm not earning a third of that."

"But couldn't you buy an interest in the firm, Corry?"

"Of course; but how, when I can't touch the principal? That old miser Mumford looks on me as a child, but I'll show him, and them all. For every dollar I put in West Verona property I'll take out three—and that is only a fair and gentlemanly profit. You needn't say anything more, for either you don't understand business, or you are piqued because Emily was my informant. There is neither logic nor courtesy in your contention. I think you can safely leave it to Emily and me as to what is honorable and what dishonorable. I almost regret I confided in you, and I don't know why I did so, except that it has become sort of a habit."

"I'm sorry if I said anything that annoyed you, Corry. Won't you forgive me, please? You know I'm queer in every way. Please tell me more. What is the price of this land, who is the owner, and how are you going to secure it?"

"Well," he said sulkily, "a man named Parker owns the section that will be utilized as the park. He lives in the South, but the East Verona Realty Company is his agent, and I've been negotiating with it. He has already received one bid of sixty thousand, and I expect that is from an agent of the city. I don't intend to bid against them, but to close the deal at once by giving his asking price—seventy-five thousand. Otherwise, if he found two bidders, he would raise it to, perhaps, a hundred or grow suspicious and hold on."

"The companies who are acting for the city don't know they are doing so?" she asked.

"No; they are buying for a dummy and, wherever possible, the dummy deals directly with the owner. I know the East Verona Company, of which I spoke, though unaware of the fact, is acting for the city, for Sheedy, its head man, told me in confidence that they had just sold a parcel of West Verona

lots to a party in Brooklyn—the city's dummy, of course."

"But you don't have to pay all the money down, do you?" she asked naively. "Of course I don't know anything about such matters, but aren't there such things as options? Pay so much and then resell before——"

"Not in this instance," he interrupted. "Parker's terms are cash, and I'm just as glad, for I want the title clear. Cash and for the full amount."

"But you haven't the money, Corry, have you?"

"No; but I will have it if I must move heaven and earth. I can't miss this chance of a lifetime, Ione. I saw Mumford yesterday, but couldn't budge him an inch. He won't let me touch the principal on any conditions, and when I told him I would mortgage the house he smiled—that habitual sneer of his—and said he thought I would find a clause in the will prohibiting me."

"Really, Corry, Mr. Mumford is not so harsh as he seems."

"How do you know? I say he is harsher than he seems. I almost wish my uncle had never left me a cent. What's the use of having it if it's to be tied up this way, and an old watchdog set over it who takes it for granted that everything I do is wrong? I'm getting sick of it. You know I don't care for legal matters, and I never bothered about the will. I was satisfied that Mumford was made the sole executor, for being the family lawyer he should know the ropes. But I don't believe such restrictions were placed on the property as he says, and I'm going to look up the will, and I'll hire another lawyer."

"Oh, give Mr. Mumford another chance, Corry. His bark is worse than his bite."

"Then I hope he won't bark," replied Winter sarcastically. "I've felt his teeth more than once, and they're enough. He always seemed to have a grudge against me, why I don't know, unless he thinks my uncle should have left the money to him."

"I'm sure you will find him all right if you go to him to-morrow," said Ione,

squinting at her needle. "He's dyspeptic, poor man, and perhaps to-day he ate too many crackers and too little milk. Do see him again."

"I intend seeing him once again, and only once. I haven't time or patience to waste with his humors. I must have the mortgage money without delay."

"And you will have it; I'm sure you will," she said confidently. "Just remember the crackers and milk, Corry, and be nice. Be sure and let me know, won't you, how the West Verona matter turns out?"

"Of course. You'll be here."

"No, I won't, Corry," she said mildly, shaking her head. "I'm leaving this week just as soon as this spring cleaning is over. Of course I should go to-morrow, but I—I have a certain pride in my housekeeping duties—you know I play that I'm running the house. It's such fun—and I do want everything to be just right. I'll leave a list of the linen room so you'll know just where everything is, and you must be sure that Mrs. Drop keeps the morning sun out of the drawing-room. That's her one failing. That Axminster, you know, *will* fade."

While she gayly rattled on, bending low over her sewing, her face shaded from the light, Winter sought his pipe and smoked moodily.

"There's no need of your going so soon, Ione," he said roughly. "Time enough when things have been definitely settled between Emily and myself. I—I don't like this idea of your suddenly rushing off like this."

"Nonsense, Corry," she said composedly, very busy putting in a difficult stitch. "I must rush off some time, you know, and the sooner the better."

He winced and bit savagely on his pipe; then arose and threw it on the table.

"It—it's like turning you out of your home, Ione."

"Now, be sensible," she said practically. "We made a perfectly fair agreement, and I think we have both lived up to it. At least I have tried to. I was to stay until your real wife-to-be arrived upon the scene, until you found

the 'other woman.' Well, you have found her, and the agreement is at an end. That's all."

He eyed her, rumpling his hair.

"Well, you don't seem to care much," he burst out, quite illogically, striding from the room.

Subsequently Mrs. Drop, the peaked-nosed, grim-visaged housekeeper, was highly astonished to discover her young mistress gravely dancing the sailor's hornpipe in solitary state. Stranger still, it appeared as if the young mistress had lately been crying. But then Mrs. Drop, despite her vehement denials, was villainously near-sighted, and might have been mistaken. There could be no other explanation for such contradictory actions on the part of the young mistress.

## VI.

Mr. Raphael Burdock had the felicity of being proprietor of Verona's greatest industry, his mammoth factory on the west side supplying innumerable nightshirts to innumerable individuals. He was one of the largest manufacturers of that necessary article, his trade motto: "I Put the World to Sleep" being known far and wide, and accepted in entire good faith.

Nightshirts, however necessary to high society, are not considered by members of the latter as prompting an intimacy with the maker thereof, and thus Mr. Burdock, an estimable, sagacious, and comfortable gentleman in every respect, had found himself quite outside the barricades of the Verona inner circle. So long as he retained his digestion, a discriminating taste in alcoholic beverages, and other necessary appurtenances of a healthy male animal, Mr. Burdock would have been entirely satisfied to remain outside the barricade. His wife, however, suffered from the social itch, and for her sake he butted his grizzled head, with characteristic cheerful pugnacity, against the bulwarks of the aristocracy.

It was not, however, until the morning following Ione's verbal decision regarding her leaving Verona, that Mr. Burdock secured what he termed "a

run for his money." Thus far his efforts had been fruitless—an obscure and needy relative of the great Van Reifensdorfers being his sole bag—but on this occasion as he was leaving his house en route to resume the unending labor incident upon augmenting his nightshirt army, he was hailed by Mrs. Winter in her smart dogcart.

Mr. Burdock, his hitherto fruitless campaign having rendered him slightly pessimistic, was so startled that he almost swallowed his cigar. At no time would this have been a difficult matter, for his mouth was very generous. His voice was in proportion, and stored away somewhere in the depths of his capacious stomach was an alarming laugh; a single, stentorian, aggressive "Ha!" which, giving no warning of its approach, and being in no manner incident upon the humor of the conversation or situation, had been known to quite frighten timid maiden ladies, and to even unnerve a sensitive horse. Aside from this pleasing characteristic, Mr. Burdock's architecture was open to serious criticism. Not only was his façade immodestly prominent, but he was wholly out of drawing. The best that can be said of his physical attractions is that he resembled a Dachshund which, starting out with good intentions, but becoming petrified, had changed into a baby grand piano.

While he stood, hat in hand, longing to slake his momentary embarrassment in a good drink of beer, Ione was chatting as if he were a life member of the "Set."

"You see, I'm out early, Mr. Burdock," she was saying. "I always am. I love the morning—the first smile of the day. You, too, are a lover of nature, aren't you? At least you are quite famous, you know, as our local authority on botany."

"I love flowers and all that," inadvertently waving a pulpy hand to the restive cob. "Nature and me get along first-rate together, Mrs. Winter. No sham or make-believe, but just man to man. Yes, I love nature."

"Then I'm sure you and I will be friends," she said, with a smile, "for I



hope I'm very natural. I'm going your way, so won't you permit me to deprive you of your morning walk and let me drop you at your office?"

More at ease, he ventured to replace his hat, for the sun was scorching his bald head, while, for his wife's sake, he earnestly hoped that the awakening town was fully cognizant of his so suddenly attained social prominence.

"You are very kind, ma'am," he said in his best manner, "but West Verona isn't the place for a lady to drive. There's lots prettier places around here."

"But West Verona is just where I'm going, Mr. Burdock. Come, I assure you it won't be any obligation on my part."

"Ha! In that case, ma'am, your humble servant," responded the night-shirt Napoleon, climbing nimbly into the dogcart.

"Please don't throw away your cigar," said Ione. "I like the smell of them."

Mr. Burdock glanced doubtfully at his coal-black stogie, strong as his appetite, but entirely reassured, folded his arms, and they rattled away behind the high-stepping cob much to the secret wonder of the town and the unbounded admiration of Mrs. Burdock, who, sheltered by her bedroom curtains, had anxiously watched the proceedings.

Ione soon found those subjects with which her companion was entirely familiar, and on this common ground they met with excellent results. From appreciating Mrs. Winter's society solely for his wife's sake, Mr. Burdock before the drive was ended liked Ione purely for her own sake.

When the night-shirt emporium at length forced its ugly presence upon their vision, Mr. Burdock, a shrewd twinkle in his gray eyes, turned to his companion.

"And now, ma'am, what can I do for you?" he asked bluntly. "I'm a plain man, as you see, and I think you can be as plain with me. I know you don't come driving up as you did without there's something I can do for you in a business way. Though I don't care for

pink teas and all that, the wife does, and my being seen driving with you will do more for us than all the money and good temper I've wasted so far. You know that, and I know it, ma'am. I appreciate it, and I'll return the compliment in my own way if I can. I guess this ain't exactly the way you'd put it, but you must make allowances, for I'm a plain man."

Ione, to prolong the time, checked the cob to a walk.

"I'm very glad you have spoken so frankly, Mr. Burdock," she said, "for I was at loss how to begin. I do want you to do something for me, but you've been so nice I didn't want to take advantage of you, and I know you are quite shrewd enough to detect a subterfuge."

"Ha! I am, ma'am."

"Well, I intended asking you directly, for that's my way," she smiled. "I hope you will answer me with your usual frankness, for I give you my word that it will go no farther, and that I will not take advantage of the information. I am acting for no one but myself, nor does any one, even my husband, know of my intention. I will put my question in such a way that by answering, your oath of office will in no manner be violated."

Mr. Burdock reflectively pulled the lobe of a massive ear. "You flatter me, ma'am. What can I do for you? You wasn't thinking of getting a raft of lingerie at cut rates, eh? If so, I'll be proud to oblige you, ma'am. Just say the word."

"No, I wasn't thinking of that," gravely replied Ione. "It's merely this: As a friend, Mr. Burdock, would you advise me to invest in West Verona real estate?" turning and eying him directly.

"Whew, is that all?" he said, and bellowed "Ha!" so violently that the horse shied. "Have you been bitten by that old bug? Why there's nothing in it, and never will be. Don't sink a cent, ma'am, for this side of the town will never be fit for anything better than it is—factories and cheap tenants."



"But why, Mr. Burdock?"

"Why? Because the town ain't going that way, ma'am, and never will, and you can't stop it if you sunk a fortune. It ain't because the colored folks and factories are here that the land's cheap; it was born cheap. And why? says you. Why, because folks will follow the water every time. The Sound is where you get your unrestricted view, your boating and all that, and the breeze that makes this place a paradise in summer. Back here it would fry you alive—I know what my electric fans cost me each year. Why, ma'am, ten years ago a land improvement company paid a lot to find out just what I'm telling you, and the suckers who bought ground here have been trying their darndest ever since to get rid of it. Yes, ma'am. A town is just like a human being, and will grow only when there's some excuse for growing. You can't force it. I've known one or two shark realty companies who tried to sell lots here under the fake guarantee that the city was going to buy it up and make a public park, and you bet the people who own land here would like to see it done, but it never will. Never! You can take my honest word for it, ma'am. If you're going to invest, buy east and not west, and I'll stand by that advice for every cent I've got. Yes, ma'am. And any talk you may hear of this so-called colored peril is all nonsense."

"You have just stated my own belief," said Ione, offering her hand, "but of course I am very ignorant, and I wanted to be sure. Thank you so much. I wonder would you and Mrs. Burdock care to come to the Armory dance. Do you think so?"

"Ha! You just bet we would, ma'am. But I don't want you to think you're obligated to me for anything."

"And I don't want you to think, Mr. Burdock, that it will be in any sense a favor. I hope, if I may, you will let me number you among my friends, and that this is but the beginning of a more intimate acquaintance."

"Your servant, ma'am," replied the nightshirt genius, doffing his hat.

He watched Mrs. Winter out of sight. "I guess," he murmured, "there's nicer people in this society game than I thought. She's a thoroughbred. Maybe, Raffy, the wife won't be tickled, eh? Well, I guess."

That evening, Winter came home in high good humor for, contrary to his expectation, the lawyer Mumford had acceded to his wishes, and given him a clear title to the house.

"He did it with as ill grace as possible," he explained to Ione, "but I knew he couldn't hold out against me, and I'm glad I decided to see him once more. I've placed the matter with the Title Mortgage Company."

"How would it do to invest the money in your firm instead of buying West Verona real estate?" tentatively suggested Ione.

Winter laughed. "Don't be silly," he said briefly. "Will you ever acquire a commercial mind? I suppose you would advise me not to, eh?"

"Well—not without first assuring yourself that the city is going to do what you say."

"That's like your sex," he laughed. "A penny cautious and a pound foolish. It's more than enough for me that Emily knows. If you had her brains, Ione——"

"Oh, if I only had, Corry!"

"I suppose," he added indulgently, "you would advocate my going to the town council, and extracting the secret by main force? Going to that impossible Burdock and asking him point-blank."

"Yes, that's what I did, Corry. I think if you want to know a thing it's best just to ask it."

"What," he exclaimed, white with anger and anxiety. "Do you mean to say you went to Burdock? You're not in earnest, Ione. You can't be——"

"But I am, Corry. I—I just asked him——"

"Just asked him," he mimicked tragically. "You've ruined me. Ruined me! I hope you are satisfied. They will have bought Parker out to-day. This was your pledged word of secrecy. I was a fool to ever confide in



*"I'm going now, Corry. I hope I haven't disturbed you, but I did want to say good-by."*

you. I have always known you were more of a child than woman, but I did think you could be loyal. You knew what this meant to me, and there can be only one explanation of your conduct. You have done this thing deliberately, sold me out, because you can't forgive Emily. What a mean revenge!"

"Oh, Corry, please don't jump around that way. You make me nervous and I've ruined this centrepiece. There, sit down and smoke your pipe. Really, I haven't the brains to be so elaborately revengeful as you say. I didn't say anything to awaken Mr. Burdock's suspicions, and I just wanted to be sure there was no mistake." And she thereupon rehearsed her conversation with the nightshirt Napoleon, while Winter sullenly pulled at his pipe.

"Well, it's not so bad as I thought," he admitted, "but it's not your fault if Burdock hasn't become suspicious. I'll have to clinch the deal first thing tomorrow. It's well you said you were

acting solely for yourself, and that no one knew of your intention for, somehow, people believe you, Ione. I hope this will be a lesson for you not to meddle with things you don't understand."

"But you believe I was acting as I thought best, don't you, Corry? That I hadn't any thought of revenge?"

"Forgive me if I said that, Ione. I was so upset I didn't know what to do. I suppose you think Burdock was telling you the truth?"

"Of course he was," she said placidly. "Everybody will tell you the truth if you just ask them, Corry. Why not? I have always found it so."

Reassured, he regarded her with smiling eyes, with infinite indulgence and compassion. "Well, you're certainly a funny mixture," he nodded. "You seem bright enough in some ways, and yet are hopelessly innocent and ignorant in others. Can't you see that Burdock was lying sixty to the minute? Filling you up with nonsense? Do you actually believe he would tell you

the truth? Not for one moment, my dear."

Even in such a perfunctory manner, it was the first time he had employed such a term, and she bent the lower over her sewing in order to hide the telltale answering flush. "I'm quite sure Mr. Burdock was speaking the truth, Corry. He is much nicer than we thought him, and won't you please believe that what he says is true? Mrs. Challoner must be mistaken, must have jumped at conclusions."

"Let us say no more on the matter," he replied quietly. "You know I am quite decided, and that nothing can shake me. Nothing!"

## VII.

The following morning, Ione paid a visit to Mrs. Carstairs, widow of the late McAllister Carstairs, who, in his day, had owned considerable blue blood and little else.

The burden of supporting an old and honored name on "nothing a year"—the quotation is her own—had given Mrs. Carstairs a crying voice and apathetic manner, for, although possessed of a comfortable annuity and her home, nothing was ever right with her.

She had come to look forward to Ione's social visits, for the girl made a sympathetic and hopeful audience, and, unlike all others, never so much as hinted that the multiple Carstairs' complaints were purely imaginary. This occasional and successful emptying of her complaint department imparted to Mrs. Carstairs a spiritual and physical uplift. During the interim, she methodically and patiently acquired a fresh batch of ills, but at times these being difficult to select—for, according to her own confession, she had been a victim of everything from appendicitis to an early abortive love affair with "a military gentleman"—she fell back upon the old reliable "family troubles."

Into this haven, Ione now charitably guided Mrs. Carstairs, for the latter's discourse on her liver had been lacking in wonted enthusiasm, and, moreover,

the subject-matter was rather hackneyed. Mrs. Carstairs promptly and nobly availed herself of this new field of sorrow.

"Of course, I never complain," she was now saying, "but it does seem, my dear, as if I had been born under an unlucky star, or that the Almighty selected me above all others as an innocent object of His wrath. Although I strive to bear my cross like a true Christian, there are times when I would like to get from under it just so as I could take a long breath."

"Now, take Emily's marriage. Although I would never say a word against my son-in-law, and although, of course, I would never advocate a child of mine marrying for money, still we did expect that Jack had something. And then there was Emily herself. Her expectations were also shattered, poor dear. We fully expected that she would come into a small fortune when my sister died, for Emily was the sole legatee. And what did my sister leave? Nothing. Absolutely nothing, but a lot of practically worthless land in West Verona. That was Emily's lot, and nothing more."

"But isn't it worth something?" innocently asked Ione.

"Nothing," wailed Mrs. Carstairs. "Nothing compared to what was paid for it. Why, my sister gave over a hundred thousand for it. We have learned that that was ten years ago, when a land improvement company started a boom on the West Side. They do say, my dear, that your husband's uncle, Mr. Pell, was behind the scheme, but I can't believe it. He was far too upright a man for anything like that. You know he was mayor at the time, and they say he permitted it to be understood that the city would make a public park on the West Side."

"What an original idea," gravely exclaimed Ione.

"Perhaps; but nothing came of it, and my sister was ruined. And she never told us, either," wailed Mrs. Carstairs. "It was just our usual luck. Finance, my dear, is what makes romance possible, and I'm sure if Em-

ily and Jack had enough to live on they would find more pleasure and contentment in each other's society than they seem to do. Despite appearances, you know, they are not well off, and goodness knows my small pittance hardly suffices for my own wants. Naturally you will say: 'Why doesn't Jack stir himself and make more money?' But that is all very well for one who has been brought up with no expectations. He, however, had great prospects but, like Emily's, they never materialized. I tell you in confidence, my dear, that any talk of an estrangement between them is mere wicked gossip. I know Emily positively adores Jack—why, I can't quite see—and if there is any misunderstanding between them it is due solely to their being mutually disappointed in their expectations."

"Yes, from what Emily said the other day I could see that she thinks the world and all of her husband," replied Ione. "We must see that he returns the compliment." She laughed.

"Oh, he does, my dear. He does," said Mrs. Carstairs. "I must give him that credit. He is not very demonstrative, but I know he feels deeply. Why, he's over here every night. Emily is living with me simply to cut down expenses. If Jack was once clear of all debt he would be the most devoted of husbands. I'm sure of it. It's pure business worry that's to blame for his absorption and seeming indifference. You have no idea, my dear, how lack of money can separate even the most devoted of couples; break up the most domestic of homes. I should know, for my husband McAllister was far too much of a gentleman to make money. Talking to you is such a relief. I can be quite frank, for I know how you respect confidences."

Inspired by this successful disgorging of her family troubles, Mrs. Carstairs offered to revert to her liver; but was unhappily prohibited from so doing, for Ione found that it was time to leave.

That evening, Ione knocked timidly on the door of Winter's sacred study and, permitted entrance, found him en-

grossed at his desk. Since their marriage, it was the first time she had encroached upon his domains, for both had kept inviolate the other's quarters in the house. This only had been accomplished with secret difficulty to each, for Winter, despite his sense of injury and pride, was no more superhumanly spiritual than Ione. There had been many occasions when he had been dangerously near sweeping away the barriers of pride and reserve, yielding entirely to the lure of the physical, to Ione's personality; prompt flight and a Spartan-like mastery over self had alone saved him. Though never a prober of his own emotions, he vaguely sensed that if Ione ever again acted as she had on the day of their engagement, he would be lost. At first, he was thankful that she did not, but as time wore on and she kept strictly to the letter of their agreement, gratitude gave place to surprise, and surprise to a vague misgiving. Even if one does not reciprocate, there is a certain egotistical pleasure and gratification in being loved, providing the adoration does not degenerate into a nuisance.

It was this gratification that Winter came to miss, and now, despite his engrossment, he was genuinely pleased that Ione had sought him. But all pleasure vanished when, looking up, he found her wearing the same traveling dress and hat in which she had been married.

"I'm going now, Corry," she said simply. "I will take the eight-fifteen, and Williams will drive me to the station. I hope I haven't disturbed you, but I did want to say good-by."

Manlike, he refused to believe that her wishes were not his.

"You're not serious, Ione," he said. "Why, anyway, you can't run off at this hour of the night. I have made no arrangements—"

"But I have," she laughed. "I have a friend in New York who has settled everything for me."

"Who?" he harshly demanded.

"Why, Mr. Mumford, Corry. You know he has always been very nice to me—for your sake, of course. Now,

I've told everybody in town that I'm going on a visit to a sick relative, and it's none of their business if I haven't any relatives. I'll just stay for a while in the city at a quiet hotel—where I may eventually go I don't yet know—and I simply won't come back. Then, in time, you can secure your divorce."

"This has upset me greatly," he said peevishly, throwing down his pen. "You're always doing unexpected things."

"But, Corry, this was expected since the night of our marriage."

He made no reply, but stared moodily at the desk.

"I can't allow it," he said at length. "I have found that it is not a question of my inclinations, but your future. You were my father's ward, and he regarded you almost as a daughter. His last words were a wish for your welfare, and when he died he considered that assured. I can't go back on my word, so take off your things, Ione—"

"No, Corry, I can't."

"I say you must."

"And I repeat that I cannot."

"Why? Because of Emily?"

"It might have been any woman other than Mrs. Challoner. It's just that our agreement is at an end, Corry. Surely you can see that."

"Ione," he said, rising, "this means more to me than I thought. I never knew it would be as hard as this. You and I have been very close—"

"Please say good-by and let me go," she whispered.

"I won't. I can't," he said. "You must not go. You are as dear to me as any sister—"

"Still even sisters must go, Corry."

"Then stay, not as a sister, but as my wife; my wife in deed as well as in name," he said harshly. "Stay because I love you."

"No, no, Corry," she cried, pushing him away. "Don't tempt me. You don't know how the past year has tempted me. Have you forgotten Mrs. Challoner?"

"You are more to me, Ione. I realize it now. I was mad that night."

"And you are mad this night, Corry."

We must make no more mistakes. You are impulsive and warm-hearted. You confound the natural regret at parting with a more permanent affection. There, go and sit down. You will soon be yourself again."

"You are playing with me," he said harshly. "I don't believe you ever loved me, and you will positively be glad to get rid of me. I don't see why," he added ingenuously, as she offered no reply. "Haven't you had everything you wished? Have I stinted you in anything?"

"It isn't that, Corry."

"Well, what is it, then?" he demanded. "Is—is it some one else? Do you love some one else?"

"If I do?"

"If you do, I'll wring his damned neck! There, I didn't mean that, Ione. Of course, you were as free to love as I—"

"No, I was not as free to love as you," she interrupted, "for I already loved. But for me this mock marriage never would have been contracted. Love impelled me, but I see now it was a selfish love. You say that you love me, but can't you see I am afraid that you have again mistaken your emotions? Time and absence alone will prove them. Believe me, it is hard for me to go, but also believe me that it is best. Let us just pretend that all this has never been. That I never wronged you, stole your liberty, your right to bestow your affections upon whom you choose. I made a bad mistake, but let me rectify it if I can. Let us be as we once were—just good friends. Then in the future, perhaps—"

"The future is always the present, Ione. I ask you again to stay."

"I cannot, Corry."

"Very well," he said stiffly. "I'm sure I don't wish to force my affections upon you. I did think you cared something for me—but we won't discuss that any further. I will arrange about your funds, transfer your account to a New York bank, and I will place to your credit the first of every month three hundred dollars if that will suffice. If not, let me know."

"You are very kind, Corry, but I don't require it."

"At least be sensible," he returned. "It is my pleasure and duty to provide for you as I would a sister. I'm sorry if you dislike me so much that you abhor the thought of my assisting you in any way, but, of course, my doing so is absolutely necessary."

"It is not, Corry. I—I have means of my own. I—I meant to tell you that I have never required my account at the bank. I found I could write silly little stories for the magazines which they are kind enough to pay for—why I really don't know. I don't mean to say that I have in any way contributed to—to our living expenses, but I really didn't need my personal account."

"You mean to say you have been earning your own living all this time?" he asked quietly.

"You know I haven't, Corry," she said nervously. "I—I had just so much time and—and it's no fun just thinking and—and then I found the magazines somehow did want my foolish fiction. That's all it is, Corry, for you know I'm stupid and silly—and—and fifty dollars a week isn't to be sneezed at—whatever that may mean." She threw her head back, and laughed in her old captivating manner, but he refused to soften.

"If you wished to humiliate me you couldn't have succeeded better," he said. "You, my wife—"

"But—but I'm not a real wife," she said tearfully. "Don't be angry, Corry. Please don't. You have no right to support me, and surely you didn't think that I intended you should. And—and if I can earn my own living, why not? I—I have just a little pride; a little small bit that no doubt is the wrong kind, for nothing I have is like other people's, though I don't know why. Corry, you're not angry?"

"No, I'm not angry," he said colorlessly.

"Then—then say good-by, Corry."

He remained staring at the desk as if he had not heard, and after waiting for a long moment and hesitating

much, she slipped noiselessly from the room.

The closing of the hall door awoke him as from a dream.

"Ione!" he called, running into the corridor.

He checked an impulse to pursue, and, reëntering the study, filled his pipe, and stony-faced and stony-hearted, smoked far into the morning.

## VIII.

Since the potential night on the veranda, Winter had not been alone with Mrs. Challoner. This he thought had been due solely to his own resolve to in no manner improve their intimacy until both could do so with perfect freedom. Since then they had met on several more or less public occasions, and he had been gratified to see that her conception of honor and duty tallied with his own; that she helped to meet him on the old ground of friendship, helped him to forget that the barriers had for a moment been swept away.

It would have occasioned Winter much astonishment had he known that Mrs. Challoner was as secretly pleased as himself at this supposedly admirable exhibition of self-control. Her work was finished, and she was somewhat afraid of the damage. She feared that she had unloosed a torrent which there would be no stemming, and this was the more believable in view of her own feelings, for, while her primary motive had been finance, there had been moments when she had found herself yielding to romance, and this, despite the fact that she cared more for her indifferent husband's little finger than for Winter's entire carcass.

Mrs. Van Reifensdorfer's estimate of the Challoners' domestic relations had been for the nonce unusually correct. They had married for money, but Emily—for reasons only known to herself—had since managed to fall in love with her husband, and to this fact he was totally and obdurately blind, for he could not impute to her emotions other than her primal one of finance,



and if she had subsequently acted for him as a refined sort of jackal, he had attributed it solely to her not unnatural desire of repleting the family fortunes, for, according to his philosophy, they had both been "done"—married for money, to find poverty—and the only thing to do was to make the best of it; go after, in concert, that wealth which had been denied them.

With the dawning of the Winters upon the town had come a corresponding brightening of the Challoners' fortunes. He had accurately summed up Winter, and with the aid of his wife promptly inaugurated the admirable plan of disposing at an exorbitant figure the comparatively worthless property which had been her sole dot. In a measure this scheme had been accidental, Winter's self-sufficiency, aloofness, and partiality for Emily pointing the way. But Challoner had always hoped to ultimately sell the land to some "sucker," and had held it against such an occasion instead of selling out at its real value—providing a purchaser could be secured. In this he had been supported by the plausible Mr. Samuel Sheedy, manager of the Verona Realty Company and an old friend, whose interest in the estimable proceeding was reckoned at ten per cent.

On the day of Ione's departure from Verona, Winter had closed the deal with the entirely imaginary Parker, and the following day found him sole possessor of that admirable section of West Verona property for which his keen business foresight and judgment had hungered. He likewise possessed the privilege of paying the Title Mortgage Company the sum of four thousand-odd dollars per annum, this being the interest on the loan. He also owned the prospect of seeing the mortgage on the beautiful Pell mansion foreclosed if by any mischance he was unable to meet the interest. But he was entirely satisfied with his bargain, and, minus all misgiving, placidly awaited the overtures of the out-manœuvred municipal authorities. In the same pleasant frame of mind, Mr. Samuel Sheedy had pocketed his commission, and a hitherto un-

known era of prosperity and felicity had set in for the Challoners. In fact, all hands seemed satisfied.

But if Winter was content with his bargain, and his own business acumen, he was greatly upset over the continued absence of Ione, for he had owned a sneaking belief that she would return of her own volition. Day by day he began to realize a little more clearly how much he had, unconsciously, depended upon her—for even a sister can be missed. If Mrs. Drop faithfully performed her duties with promptitude and exactitude, there was yet missing all those little touches which only a devoted woman can bestow, and which spell all the difference between paid service and love service, between the life of a hotel and the life of home.

Again, Ione began to assume a new identity, one with which he had never credited her. She had ever been at his beck and call, subject to his needs and desires; too much the sister; too little the strange woman; so close that he had overlooked those attributes which distance alone can disclose. His had been the old case of familiarity breeding contempt; for love's sake she had cheapened herself, and he had accepted it as her real standard.

But she was away now, and only the loving work of heart and hand remained, manifested in a thousand little ways which, hitherto, he had never seen. He came to understand that, with all her childishness, she had run the house like a veteran; generous without being wasteful; careful without being niggardly. Her private account had been left untouched; every allowance he had added being left intact. Jewelry, clothes, which he had given her as presents—and which he now remembered she had never worn—he found neatly assorted in her room. Attached to one skirt was a card bearing a characteristic message in her handwriting, which caused him to smile even as he winced. It read:

"Tell Emily the drop skirt must be taken up, for the gown looks like a peacock with superimposed tails."

She had taken nothing but what she

had brought with her, or what had been paid for by her own earnings.

With Winter, the hunger of the heart was slowly added to infinite and utter loneliness, but pride kept him from making the first overtures toward a reconciliation and, again, he had yet to see Mrs. Challoner. That meeting he had been shirking. Did he love her, or did he not? Was this revulsion merely another manifestation of his peculiar, unstable temperament? As Ione had charged, did he confound loneliness and the natural regret at parting with a more ardent, permanent affection, and would the pendulum again swing in Mrs. Challoner's direction?

Winter was not a "drifter" by nature, but before he could satisfy himself regarding these questions, Mrs. Challoner had forced the issue by calling upon him. If he had entertained any doubts as to the measure of his regard for her, they were set at rest by this proceeding, for when the housekeeper announced: "Mrs. Challoner, sir, and would like to see you very particular," he felt like the condemned criminal summoned in the early dawn to expiate his crimes.

As he entered the room, Mrs. Challoner turned from the window, and for a long moment their eyes met. Then he bowed formally, and offered a chair.

Now, Emily Challoner had dreaded the meeting quite as much as Winter, but instead of being utterly relieved at this cold reception, thankful to find that she had not reaped the whirlwind, something of the devil awoke within her. Wounded vanity was up in arms. She resented the fact that her charms seemingly no longer allured, and coupled with this was a truly feminine inquisitiveness to know whether or not Winter's indifference was genuine.

"Corry," she said slowly, holding him with her eyes, "do you realize that this is the first time we have been really alone since—since—" She waited for him to finish the sentence, but he did not. "I do believe," she added, with a laugh, "that you are lonely. Is it possible? Why, you look as love-sick as—"

"As I am," he finished.

She shrugged impatiently. "For Ione? Nonsense! Why, my dear boy, you don't understand your own nature. Come over and sit here—yes, just here. Don't look so tragic. I'm not going to eat you. Is it possible you have forgotten that delightful night—"

"No, I have not forgotten," he interrupted. "But you don't think I am going to resume where I left off?"

"Why?" she asked calmly. "Now, I know what you're going to say, Corry," she quickly added. "You are going to prate about honor and all that. Do you know, we could have had a very nice flirtation but for your stupid idea of honor? I suppose, for instance, if I now should happen to—well, kiss you—you would run right off, and tell Ione, wouldn't you? You did the last time, you know. I thought no man believed that he *must* tell his wife everything—even what's not true; for you had the impudence to tell Ione that I loved you."

"Then you don't, and never did?" he asked, flushing. "You were playing with me—is that it?"

She smiled at him through half-closed eyes. "Come, and sit here, Corry. No? I do believe you are afraid. You see, I do care for you after a fashion of my own, but not in the way you seem to imagine. You are so terribly in earnest, so terribly serious. I don't see why there should be any scandal or divorce."

"Do you favor an intrigue?" he asked bluntly.

"What words you use! You are absolutely hopeless." She sighed. "We have intrigues only in France."

He stared at her. "I must be hopeless," he agreed. "I thought I loved you, Emily, but it wasn't in that manner; and I thought you were—well, different. My conception of our mutual regard was not a flirtation, and I thought yours was the same. I have evidently made a bad mistake."

"Only one of many," she said graciously. "I really believe, Corry, you think rather too much of yourself and rather too little of others. You have



*"This is mere spite work on your part, Mr. Mumford."*

utterly mistaken what you term 'our mutual regard,' for, of course, I would no more think of divorcing Jack than of marrying you. I know this is good news, so you need not pretend to be offended. We have both recovered from our momentary foolishness; and do promise me that you'll never, never again misinterpret 'our mutual regard.'"

"It is well for you," he replied grimly, eying her, "that I do not care. I know little of women, and I think this is my first and last experience with a coquette—for that is your name."

"Mr. Winter," she said, rising, "at least I always considered you a gentleman. To deliberately insult me, and in your own house—"

"Come," he interrupted, "it is my turn to beg you not to be tragic. What is the good of dissembling when we have found each other out? You have discovered that I am a good bit of a fool, and I have discovered that you are a good bit of a flirt. But let us hope our condition isn't chronic. I see now that you were merely amusing

yourself with me, and I should have met you in the same spirit. I think we both are to be congratulated on escaping a lifetime spent with the other."

"That doesn't augur very well for Jack, does it?" she asked, and he could not but laugh at her expression. "Come, Corry," she added, quite in her old manner, "I don't think you have said very nice things to me after all I've done for you. Think what a load has been lifted from your mind. What if I had been in earnest, and expected you to give up Ione for—just me?"

"Don't!" he laughed. "The thought is too horrible. But you would have expected in vain, for I wouldn't."

"For shame! Not even with your wonderful idea of honor? No? Well, I see you have ceased to be amusing. You have fallen in love all over again with Ione, and a man in that condition is a nuisance to all but the right girl. I do think I'll have to go away and see if it has such an effect upon Jack. But then we're going together—the White Mountains. Yes, indeed, and I just

ran in to say good-by, and not to annoy you. Promise not to forget me entirely, even if I am a coquette. After all, it is better to be good friends than bad sweethearts."

"One moment," he said, as she offered her hand. "Of course, this awakening of mine will have no bearing on our mutual business interests."

"What are you talking about, Corry?"

"I mean I took advantage of your information regarding West Verona property."

"West Verona property?" she echoed, perplexed.

"Yes, yes," he said somewhat impatiently. "You know with regard to the conversation you overheard between Burdock and Mr. Challoner; about the city going to buy the land, and all that. Well, I got in ahead of them, and when I realize on the deal, of course you are entitled to the regular broker's commission."

"Corry Winter," said Mrs. Challoner tragically, "you don't mean to tell me that you made use of that conversation—"

"Why not?" he curtly demanded. "You knew very well I was going to do so."

"Oh, Corry!" she exclaimed reproachfully.

"Well, you intimated as much, or at least so I understood," he continued. "If not, then why did you tell me?"

"You know I was merely speaking of the publicity of party wires, and instancing a case in point. You know it was given in confidence, and I—I thought you would understand that I—"

"Do you consider it dishonorable?" he demanded.

"I—I wouldn't say that, Corry, for you have such a high conception of honor and know what is right and wrong far better than I. And I suppose it is really no harm—at least if no one knows it. But if Jack should ever discover—"

"I'll tell him."

"Oh, you mustn't," she said quickly. "That would never do. I would get

such a scolding for repeating the conversation to you. And then nothing may come of it—I mean if the city decided, after all, not to buy."

"But you said they had already bought."

"Now, Corry, please don't impute to me things I only supposed, not stated as facts. What do I definitely know about it? You remember I merely said that the project had been long discussed—which is quite true—and that it looked as if something definite was going to be done at last. And I added if one was *sure*, it would be a splendid investment. Those were my exact words."

"They were," he agreed, "but somehow—well, no one is responsible for this investment but myself, and no one but myself will be to blame if it turns out a failure. I have studied the question, and it is bound to be a success."

"Well, I do hope you have made the fullest investigations," she sighed, "for it would be awful if I were the indirect means of causing you to make a bad investment. In view of the fact that I knew nothing of your intention, I am not entitled to any commission."

"Oh, but you will accept a token of appreciation in some form," he said, smiling. "The investment is bound to be a success, and you have helped me greatly, even if you didn't intend doing so. I am very much indebted indeed."

At this frank acknowledgment, Mrs. Challoner had the grace to appear confused, and hastily took her leave. Later, she communicated her feelings to her husband.

"Oh, Jack," she exclaimed, "I never felt so mean in all my life. He is so entirely confident of his own astuteness, so frightfully innocent and stupid. It was like taking candy from a child. And he actually wants to give me a present."

"Well, let him. Every little bit helps," said Challoner with a grin. "But you've no call to feel miserable, Emily. You've merely got back your own money that was intended for your dot, for it was Old Pell, Winter's uncle, who sold the gold brick to your aunt, and

now we've sold it back again. It took some time, for the mills of the gods grind slowly, but we've done it handsomely. I bet Old Pell is turning in his grave. And the beauty of the thing is that Winter can't do anything; he is as impotent as was your aunt. As he rightly said, he has no one to blame but himself. It's bad policy, Em, to take advantage of private conversations, eh?"

## IX.

A week had passed since Ione had left, and the West Verona deal had been closed, and in both instances Winter was waiting for the mountain to come to him. He had received a letter from Ione, giving her address, and stating her safe arrival in New York, but short of curtly acknowledging its receipt, he had not entered into correspondence with her. Moreover, notwithstanding his need of her, he stubbornly vowed that he would never be the one to make the first overtures, for his pride had been sorely hurt, and was still smarting. He had offered his love, and she had refused it. It never occurred to him that his manner of offering had been greatly akin to that of one bestowing a soup bone on a stray dog.

The truth was that Winter was angry with himself for realizing that he did love Ione, realizing that she had gauged his heart better than he himself. After cloistering himself from her for over a year, nursing his wrong, and gratified with the fact that he was playing a "strong" part, it was extremely humiliating to find that all this had been unnecessary. He realized that the whole trouble lay in Ione's forcing—the term was his own—his hand, for he was stubborn to a degree and, come what might, refused to be driven.

Left to himself, his first long absence from Ione would have shown him his regard for her in its true light, even as unrestricted liberty and separation was now doing. But her holding him to the engagement had naturally aroused all his combativeness, and he considered that by finally acknowledg-

ing that he loved her he was making a gigantic concession, which she should have thankfully received, instead of questioning its genuineness.

In short, the "damned Winter pride" was still rampant, and no doubt would forever stand in the way against a reconciliation with Ione. Pride, likewise, prohibited him from harkening to the small misgivings regarding the West Verona matter, to which Mrs. Chaloner's last words had given birth.

How long Winter would have waited for the municipal authorities to make overtures in his direction but he himself knows. It remained for Mr. Raphael Burdock, however, to shatter the other's dreams of fortune and renown.

Ione had not forgotten her promised invitation to the Armory dance, and at that select function the nightshirt family was proudly present. In consequence, their social prominence was daily improving, and Burdock had come to regard Winter with a kindly eye. He had sought many ways of showing his esteem, but the other had received these unaccustomed overtures with his accustomed frigidity, and but for his wife's sake Mr. Burdock would have abandoned the attempt at thawing out. But he stuck nobly to his uncongenial task, and from merely nodding at length ventured to say "good morning" and "good evening."

Finally, on this occasion, he actually opened an extended conversation or, rather, monologue. The meeting had been fortuitous, Winter alighting from the train at the precise moment when Burdock was waiting to cross the tracks on his way home, for he despised all powers of locomotion but those which nature had given him.

"If you're going my way I'll just make so bold as to accompany you, Mr. Winter," he now said. "It's good business for me to be seen with you," he added quite frankly, "for we have social aspirations, and, thanks to Mrs. Winter, we're getting along very nicely, thank you. That Armory business was a good piece of work. Much obliged to your wife for the invitation."



Winter stared at him with cold disfavor, but Mr. Burdock, refusing to permit such a trifle to interfere with his wife's social campaign, fell into step beside his frigid and hostile companion, and, bowing right and left, proudly marched up the avenue.

Short as the walk was, Winter had ample time to gauge his companion, and, despite certain crudities of manner and speech and his thus forcing himself into a higher social strata, he found much that was likable in him. He was so genuinely human, good-humored, honest, and sincere; moreover, delightfully frank, and possessor of a gray eye which appealed like that of a faithful dog. This was not the personality which he had credited Mr. Burdock.

With a sudden sickening realization, it came to him that this man was incapable of gratuitously lying—lying, moreover, to a woman. What if Ione was right, and that her simple faith—or was it ability to judge human nature?—was correct, and his keen suspicion wrong? He glanced at his companion's shrewd, strong face. Yes, surely this man, captain of a great industry, possessed both the brains and the integrity to put a hunter on a false scent, if necessary, without openly lying.

"Mr. Burdock," he said suddenly and with forced composure, halting and facing his companion, "some time ago you were good enough to inform my wife that it would be nonsense to invest in West Verona real estate. You affirmed there was absolutely no truth in the story that the city was going to buy the property."

"I did, Mr. Winter, and I say so again. I've heard in a roundabout way that some one has been investing out there. If so, they've been stung; stung good and hard. I say the city will never buy an inch of the ground, and I should know, for I'm chairman of the board."

"Then how did it happen that you and Mr. Challoner freely discussed the matter over the telephone?"

"Who—me?" demanded Mr. Burdock, tapping his chest. "Mr. Challoner and me? When?"

"About three weeks ago," replied Winter steadily. "I have the best authority for believing the reported conversation authentic."

"Ha!" bellowed Mr. Burdock. "Then let me tell you, you're not believing rightly, and that your authority's all wrong. I never discussed the project with Challoner, or any one else, for the city never considered it at all. You take my word for it, Mr. Winter. Why, my family owns a lot out there, and have been trying to get rid of, since I was born. I'll sell it to you right now for five hundred—pay any old time you like. That will give you an idea of what property out there is worth. Go to any company but the West Verona Realty and they'll tell you the same. It ain't my business, of course, but it looks to me as if some one had been laying pipes to trim you. I wish you had come to me first off. Who told you about that fake conversation, eh?"

"I cannot say, and very likely I misunderstood them," replied Winter, with an effort at indifference. "Did I understand you to say that the West Verona Realty Company was not entirely honest?"

"Well, I wouldn't say that, Mr. Winter, but Sheedy and his crowd—well, they boom things more than is good for the town. You understand? Lying about property ain't no use, and it's sure to come back some day. As a friend, I would advise you to try a more conservative company if you ever think of investing in this town."

"I believe, Mr. Challoner is interested in that company?" said Winter, with a brilliant and totally foreign exhibition of inspiration.

"He was," replied Burdock guardedly.

"Well, I'll be sure to remember your advice should I ever decide to invest. Good night, and many thanks. I trust we will see more of each other than we have been doing."

Alone, Winter's anger, mortification, and chagrin became eloquently displayed in his face. Curiously enough, he wasn't thinking of the respectable



fortune which he had lost so much as the rôle of fool which he had played so profoundly. Like Saul of Tarsus, a great light had suddenly confronted him, and, although he had mere suspicion by which to steer, he felt that he had been the victim of a deliberate plot engineered by the Challoners. And this was the woman whom he had thought blindly devoted to his interests, heart and soul; for whose sake he had been eager to divorce Ione. The realization that he possessed no tangible evidence against the Challoners but infuriated him the more.

Without knowing what he would say, how he would act, he walked rapidly to the house of his late "affinity," only to be informed that she had left that morning with her husband for the White Mountains.

Sullenly returning home, he met the good Mrs. Van Reifensdorfer.

"Oh, didn't you know the Challoners had gone?" she asked sweetly. "How strange, for I thought Emily told you everything. Yes, they won't return for a month or more. Things seem to be going much better with them, and they are positively devoted to each other. You know I always said there was no truth in all this talk about an estrangement. Of course, Emily will flirt, but then she means no harm. When is Ione returning? We miss her dreadfully."

"She hasn't said," he returned shortly.

"Well, well," said the dowager, playfully tapping his arm, "just let her know that Emily has gone. Do you know, Mr. Winter, I have just discovered that your wife is an extraordinarily clever woman? Yes, indeed. After all, there is nothing like giving two people free rein, for then they are sure to become thoroughly disgusted with each other. Don't you think so?"

"I'm afraid I don't quite understand," he said coldly. "Good evening."

Following a miserable night, Winter, the next morning, went directly to the offices of Mr. Israel Mumford, lawyer to the late Mr. Pell, and in whose charge the estate had been left.

Always treated by the other with scant respect, though with uniform courtesy, it was now extremely difficult for Winter to confess that he had proved the asinine business man, a truth which Mumford's manner had continually insinuated.

"Ah, good morning," greeted the lawyer, proffering a chair with his habitual urbanity. "No doubt you have come to inform me how pregnant with wisdom was your policy of mortgaging the estate. No doubt you have made a sound investment, sir, which will amply compensate for the high interest."

"Correct as usual," replied Winter, with dry cynicism. "I have come to tell you that I have made an excellent investment—paid seventy thousand for property which I have since discovered is worth about a quarter of that sum."

"Such admirable investments are quite common," said Mumford with a courtly bow. "Real estate, I presume? Ah, well, the operator must live, you know. There is much money in real estate—and usually it stays there."

"You needn't say anything more, for I can dispense with your expression of esteem," replied Winter. "I have been robbed, Mr. Mumford, bunkoed by a couple of sharpers masquerading under the title of lady and gentleman. But I'm not done with them. You must fight this case through every court in the country."

"I will listen to the facts, sir. Proceed."

Winters stated his case succinctly, growing the more angry as he progressed. "And I can prove there is no such party as Parker," he finished. "They have obtained money under false pretenses, and are, therefore, amenable to the law."

"No doubt, Mr. Winter, but I am afraid your only means of redress is to cut the lady from your visiting list and to give the gentleman a black eye—though, as your lawyer, I do not advocate this procedure. You can only retain the admirable property in the hope of eventually passing it on like its late owners. In short, your case lacks tan-

gible evidence. Did any one ask you to buy? No. Did any one actually misrepresent the value of the property? No. Did——"

"Do you mean to say you will not take the case?" angrily demanded Winter.

"I do, sir."

"Then I must do what I have always contemplated—secure another lawyer; one who will have my real interest at heart," cried Winter, jumping to his feet. "This is mere spite work on your part, Mr. Mumford. You have never liked me, and are now gloating over the fact that I have made a fool of myself and have been robbed. I will have redress if there is any justice in this country. I will secure another lawyer at once, sir!"

"Mr. Winter, I beg you not to do so. Your case is not sound."

"I emphatically disagree with you," angrily interrupted the other. "Sound or not, I will fight!"

"You are quite determined to secure another lawyer?" asked Mumford coolly.

"Quite, sir. Nothing can prevent me. I am done with your services forever."

"Mr. Winter," said the old lawyer kindly, "you are forcing me into a position which I greatly dislike. I request you again to believe that I am giving you the benefit of such experience as I may have gained during forty years at the bar, and I beg you to acquit me of any malice toward you. I am acting for your best interests when I affirm your case would not stand in any court. I ask you not to take this case to another lawyer."

"I think I am the best judge of what constitutes my own interests," replied Winter with an air of finality, while he turned to the door. "Good morning, Mr. Mumford."

"One moment," said the other quickly. "Let me at least save you from a ridiculous position. I say you have no case because you——"

"Because what? Out with it!" demanded Winter, turning angrily.

"Because the money which you invested, Mr. Winter, was never yours."

Winter stopped, and stared open mouthed. "What's that you say? What do you mean?" he asked in a dazed manner. "Was never mine? Why, you're mad. You know very well I am the sole beneficiary of my uncle's estate."

"On the contrary, you were not," replied the lawyer. "Neither your name nor that of any member of your family was mentioned. The entire estate was left to my client, Ione Forrester."

Winter slowly seated himself. "I—I don't quite follow you," he said. "I must ask you to explain yourself, Mr. Mumford."

"This will do so much better," replied the lawyer, unlocking a box, and producing a neatly folded paper armed with many seals.

"Here is the original will of the late Mr. Pell, your uncle. You will see that it leaves everything—the income from the trust fund and the Long Island property—unconditionally to the lady who is now your wife."

Winter slowly read the entire contents, his face growing harder and colder as he digested each line. "This, then, is the reason, Mr. Mumford, why you never encouraged me when I professed a desire to see the will."

"By paying the fee, you could have seen the registered copy whenever you chose, Mr. Winter. I tell you frankly that at first I naturally thought you were cognizant of the entire matter—while professing ignorance—for I could not credit you with such an elaborate lack of common business instinct and knowledge which you undoubtedly possess. With all due regard, I consider you the most ignorant gentleman in that respect which it has ever been my fortune to meet. Why should my client, the late Mr. Pell, single you out for his beneficence? Did you ever ask yourself that question? Why, if he bore you any thought, it was that of extreme dislike, for it was your father who was instrumental in prohibiting him from gaining that which some men regard as the supreme gift of the Almighty—possession of the woman one loves. This woman was the mother of

your wife. Mr. Pell and Mr. Forrester both loved her. Your father, as you know, was Forrester's closest friend, and he did all in his power to favor his suit—and he succeeded. Your father, moreover, disliked my late client, for the latter had objected strenuously to the other marrying his, Pell's, sister. All this was the outcome of Forrester's successful suit. My late client remained a bachelor, for he never forgot the love of his youth, and he made the daughter and sole child of the woman whom he had loved and never gained, his sole legatee. And that this was long premeditated, I think your father knew."

"Continue," said Winter coldly. "It is unnecessary to say that I knew nothing."

"Well, then," added the lawyer, "when Ione Forrester was notified by me that she was made the sole heir of the Pell estate, she came here immediately and proposed that everything be made over to you without your knowledge. Of course, I pointed out that this was impossible. However, she finally wheedled me into making you think you were the sole legatee, for it could not be done so legally, as there was the trust fund to consider. Naturally, I would never have consented to the mortgage had she not called me up before you came and begged me to act as you desired. My part in this studied campaign of deception has been grossly irregular, a disgrace to my reputation and profession, and it is unnecessary to say I would have done it for no one but your wife. She made me solemnly swear that I would never tell you, but you have forced my hand, for had you engaged another lawyer, he would have probed into the entire matter. Of course, the trust-fund account in your name comes through me. I, being your wife's lawyer, they send me the quarterly check and I draw a duplicate in favor of you."

"An admirable campaign in which you and the lady who bears my name did not scruple to take advantage of my colossal ignorance," cried Winter, rising. "I will work my fingers to the bone to pay off this indebtedness!"

"I think you misunderstand my client's motive," said Mumford gently. "Wrong or not, believe me that disinterested affection is the rarest thing in the world."

"If it takes such a form, then, thank Heaven, it is so rare!" stormed Winter, marching out, and violently slamming the door.

Alone, Mr. Israel Mumford offered a mute prayer to the Almighty: "Save me from all future fools."

## X.

Winter did not return home until late. Besides attending to the day's regular business duties incident upon his position of assistant literary editor of a popular weekly, he had been subconsciously figuring out how long it would take to pay a debt of seventy-odd thousand on an income of two thousand five hundred per year. This was not an inspiring occupation. Of course, he had quite decided that he was done with Ione. He would never see her again. A man must have some pride.

The house was in darkness when he entered, the domestics evidently being abed, and he stumbled and cursed his way to the study. He must spend the night in an endeavor to estimate his financial indebtedness to Ione, for he had been living far beyond his earning capacity, and he would not be beholden to her for one cent. Not one cent, if it took him until doomsday to square the account! He would show her that a man can't be—

He had turned on the light and now, round-eyed, was staring at his old Morris chair. There sat Ione dressed in the simple white evening gown which had been his favorite. His heart gave a great leap, but he remembered his pride in time and, folding his arms, regarded her sternly and in silence.

"G—good evening," she ventured tremulously, plucking at her dress in the well-remembered childish manner. "I—I just couldn't stay away any longer."

"There was no occasion for your ever leaving," he said coldly. "You are not

trespassing, but I am; and I will go as soon as possible. I have seen Mumford—the wily old scoundrel—and have learned everything. I can never forgive the deception and humiliation. Never! You deliberately let me mortgage the house—*your* house, and not mine—and sink the money in that worthless property. I wouldn't care if it was my own money."

"I—I am so very sorry," whispered Ione, quite as if she had lost his fortune, and not he hers. "I am always doing the wrong thing."

"What was your reason for deceiving me in this outrageous manner?" he demanded.

She twisted her wedding ring round and round while she eyed it nervously. "I—I thought you would never care for me if you knew I was wealthy," she replied in a very small, tearful voice. "You always said you would never marry a girl with money, and you never would let me do anything for you. I know that is the right kind of pride, but I don't understand it, for I—I like people to do things for me—I mean people whom I love. And—and I didn't want the money, and it was your uncle's, not mine, even if Mr. Pell did happen to love my mother. I never meant you to know, and I'll never forgive Mr. Mumford for telling you. Oh, Corry, please, please believe that I only wanted you to love me——"

"I offered you my love, and it was refused," he said.

"Y—yes, Corry, but it was too good to be true. I wanted you to be quite, quite sure."

He eyed her long and steadily. "I believe," he said slowly, "that you knew from the first that Emily Challoner was only playing with me."

"Oh, no, Corry."

"Oh, but yes, Ione. In the past few days I have gained some understanding. And I believe you knew that the West Verona property was worthless."

"Oh, no, Corry."

"Please be truthful, Ione. You forget that you told me you believed Mr.

Burdock was speaking the truth. Why, then, in the name of common sense, did you permit me to go on with the deal, deliberately watch your own money being swept away?"

She was silent.

"Answer me, please," he commanded.

"But you wouldn't have believed anything against Emily, would you?" she pleaded. "And then, she was only getting back her own money; for it was Mr. Pell who sold the ground you have bought—sold it to Mrs. Challoner's aunt."

"That's news," he said grimly.

"And how could I interfere, Corry, without letting you know that I had deceived you concerning the will?"

"Was all this your only reason?"

"No," she said quite frankly. "I also wanted the deal to go through, for then you would find out the kind of woman Emily Challoner is. If—if she had been a different type, I would have stayed and fought but—but I found that it was better to run."

He was silent, staring moodily at the desk. Hesitatingly she arose, and stood behind his chair.

"Tell me, Corry, that you meant what you said that night," she whispered.

"You mean," he replied grimly, "tell you that I don't see why you could ever care for me?"

"No, no," she pleaded, kneeling and pulling down his hands. "Tell me that I have not staked all in vain, that I am not to go away again. That you do love me—just a little. Remember it was 'for better, for worse'—tell me that the worst has passed, and that the better has come."

Winter, taking her little hand within his own, slowly drew off the wedding ring, and as slowly replaced it. "And my poor soul and life go with it forever—if you will only take them," he said, bowing his head. "But then, dear, you have always had them."

"No, no," she whispered, pressing her lips to the ring. "Not until now, Corry—not until now!"

## ON SOCIABILITY

By Charles Battell Loomis

THE world is growing more sociable, there's no doubt of that. In a good many suburban communities men pass the time of day with others whose names they don't know, and they even chat together on the train going in or coming out. That's what suburban life does for a man.

Mind you, I don't say it does as much for a woman. Women are rather more inclined to put up barriers and wait for introductions, and I can hardly imagine a group of women, strangers to each other, but all residents of one suburban town, swapping stories in a smoking car. We'll have woman suffrage before we have that degree of sociability among women.

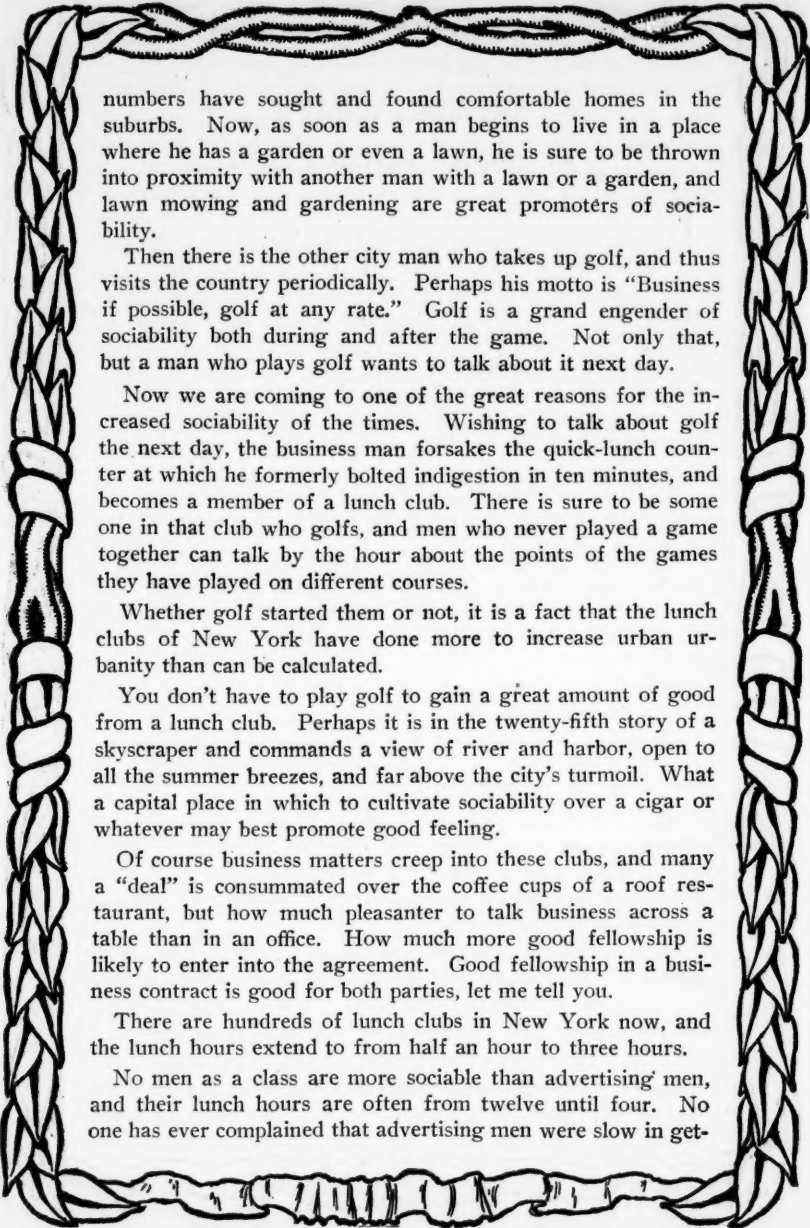
But men are growing more sociable. Perhaps the Italian laborers have taught us. Your Italian workman in the suburban districts is a very polite fellow. As he walks along with his umbrella under his arm and his dinner pail in his hand, he will surely say "Good morning" to you if you give him half a chance, and if you go farther and speak to him about the weather, his face will beam with smiles and he will say something that is as broken as it is friendly.

Sociability is on the increase, and suburban life is largely responsible for it.

Your country boy comes to the city and expects to be as hail-fellow-well-met with every one as he was in the little town in which he was brought up. He soon finds out that he might as well be on a desert island for all New York, or Boston, or any of the great cities will notice him—unless he gets in the way. Then he will receive attention.

After a while he adopts the city ways, and if he becomes a flat dweller the chances are that he will pass the time of day with no one in the building in which he lives except the janitor and the elevator boy. In course of time he becomes a typical city man, and he is not sociable.

But at the same time that country boys in large numbers have been flocking to the city, city men in almost as large



numbers have sought and found comfortable homes in the suburbs. Now, as soon as a man begins to live in a place where he has a garden or even a lawn, he is sure to be thrown into proximity with another man with a lawn or a garden, and lawn mowing and gardening are great promoters of sociability.

Then there is the other city man who takes up golf, and thus visits the country periodically. Perhaps his motto is "Business if possible, golf at any rate." Golf is a grand engender of sociability both during and after the game. Not only that, but a man who plays golf wants to talk about it next day.

Now we are coming to one of the great reasons for the increased sociability of the times. Wishing to talk about golf the next day, the business man forsakes the quick-lunch counter at which he formerly bolted indigestion in ten minutes, and becomes a member of a lunch club. There is sure to be some one in that club who golfs, and men who never played a game together can talk by the hour about the points of the games they have played on different courses.

Whether golf started them or not, it is a fact that the lunch clubs of New York have done more to increase urban urbanity than can be calculated.

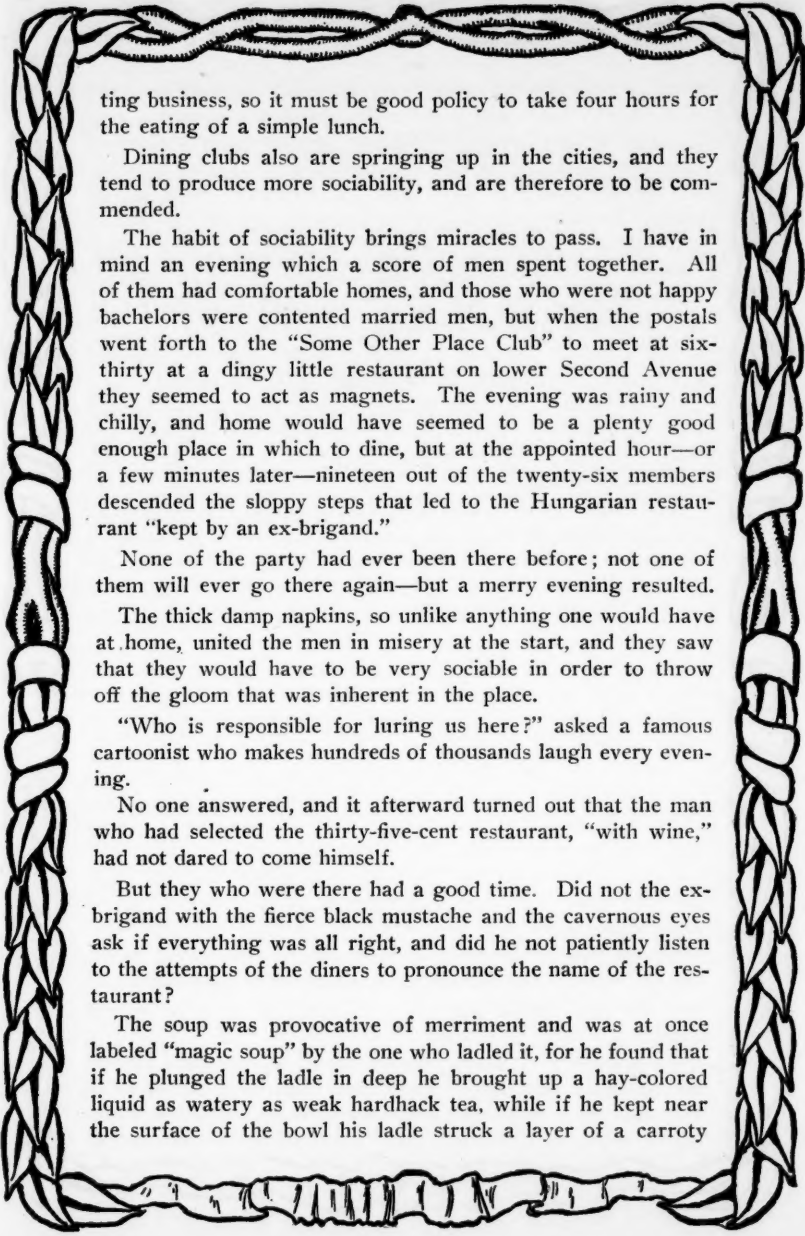
You don't have to play golf to gain a great amount of good from a lunch club. Perhaps it is in the twenty-fifth story of a skyscraper and commands a view of river and harbor, open to all the summer breezes, and far above the city's turmoil. What a capital place in which to cultivate sociability over a cigar or whatever may best promote good feeling.

Of course business matters creep into these clubs, and many a "deal" is consummated over the coffee cups of a roof restaurant, but how much pleasanter to talk business across a table than in an office. How much more good fellowship is likely to enter into the agreement. Good fellowship in a business contract is good for both parties, let me tell you.

There are hundreds of lunch clubs in New York now, and the lunch hours extend to from half an hour to three hours.

No men as a class are more sociable than advertising men, and their lunch hours are often from twelve until four. No one has ever complained that advertising men were slow in get-





ting business, so it must be good policy to take four hours for the eating of a simple lunch.

Dining clubs also are springing up in the cities, and they tend to produce more sociability, and are therefore to be commended.

The habit of sociability brings miracles to pass. I have in mind an evening which a score of men spent together. All of them had comfortable homes, and those who were not happy bachelors were contented married men, but when the postals went forth to the "Some Other Place Club" to meet at six-thirty at a dingy little restaurant on lower Second Avenue they seemed to act as magnets. The evening was rainy and chilly, and home would have seemed to be a plenty good enough place in which to dine, but at the appointed hour—or a few minutes later—nineteen out of the twenty-six members descended the sloppy steps that led to the Hungarian restaurant "kept by an ex-brigand."

None of the party had ever been there before; not one of them will ever go there again—but a merry evening resulted.

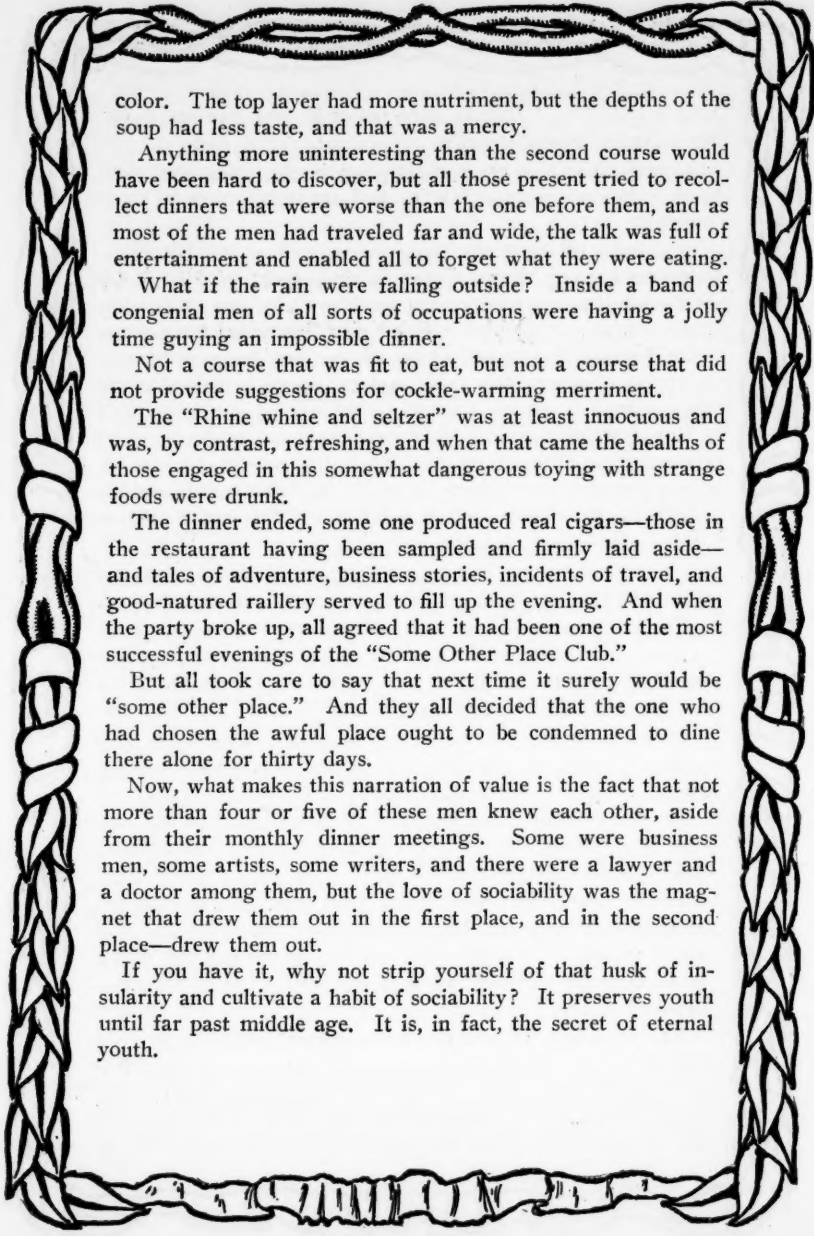
The thick damp napkins, so unlike anything one would have at home, united the men in misery at the start, and they saw that they would have to be very sociable in order to throw off the gloom that was inherent in the place.

"Who is responsible for luring us here?" asked a famous cartoonist who makes hundreds of thousands laugh every evening.

No one answered, and it afterward turned out that the man who had selected the thirty-five-cent restaurant, "with wine," had not dared to come himself.

But they who were there had a good time. Did not the ex-brigand with the fierce black mustache and the cavernous eyes ask if everything was all right, and did he not patiently listen to the attempts of the diners to pronounce the name of the restaurant?

The soup was provocative of merriment and was at once labeled "magic soup" by the one who ladled it, for he found that if he plunged the ladle in deep he brought up a hay-colored liquid as watery as weak hardhack tea, while if he kept near the surface of the bowl his ladle struck a layer of a carroty



color. The top layer had more nutriment, but the depths of the soup had less taste, and that was a mercy.

Anything more uninteresting than the second course would have been hard to discover, but all those present tried to recollect dinners that were worse than the one before them, and as most of the men had traveled far and wide, the talk was full of entertainment and enabled all to forget what they were eating.

What if the rain were falling outside? Inside a band of congenial men of all sorts of occupations were having a jolly time guying an impossible dinner.

Not a course that was fit to eat, but not a course that did not provide suggestions for cockle-warming merriment.

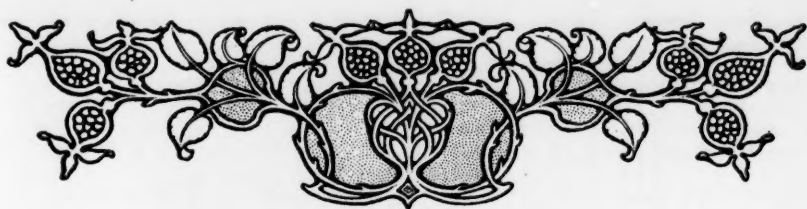
The "Rhine wine and seltzer" was at least innocuous and was, by contrast, refreshing, and when that came the healths of those engaged in this somewhat dangerous toying with strange foods were drunk.

The dinner ended, some one produced real cigars—those in the restaurant having been sampled and firmly laid aside—and tales of adventure, business stories, incidents of travel, and good-natured raillery served to fill up the evening. And when the party broke up, all agreed that it had been one of the most successful evenings of the "Some Other Place Club."

But all took care to say that next time it surely would be "some other place." And they all decided that the one who had chosen the awful place ought to be condemned to dine there alone for thirty days.

Now, what makes this narration of value is the fact that not more than four or five of these men knew each other, aside from their monthly dinner meetings. Some were business men, some artists, some writers, and there were a lawyer and a doctor among them, but the love of sociability was the magnet that drew them out in the first place, and in the second place—drew them out.

If you have it, why not strip yourself of that husk of insularity and cultivate a habit of sociability? It preserves youth until far past middle age. It is, in fact, the secret of eternal youth.



## The Baleful Influence of the Widow Trevelyan

By Anne O'Hagan

ILLUSTRATED BY H. VON S. LUCAS

IT was not essential to have qualified as an expert in the climactic possibilities of Miss Henderson's temperament to be aware of a distinct chill, upon entering the Henderson drawing-room that Sunday morning. To Oscar, who had qualified, and who came ardent with eagerness to see her after the interminable separation of two days, and flushed also with haste—for he was unhappily aware that he was half an hour late to the appointment—to Oscar the air seemed positively congealing. It fairly arrested his steps at the threshold of the room, though Aline, hatted, gloved, gracefully patient, sat quite at the opposite end of the apartment, slimly outlined in the great green Mount Vernon chair.

"Dearest," cried Oscar, with the immediate volubility of the man who feels that only by confession can he avert searching trial and condign punishment, "I'm abominably late." He moved toward her with a haste apparently designed to make up for lost time. "I owe you ten thousand apologies. But"—he laughed and made a clean breast of it—"I just plain overslept. There was a wreck on the road ahead of us last night, and we got in at two instead of eleven as per schedule — Why, darling!"

The last two words were of astonished protest. For during his guilty avowal, Mr. Pembroke had reached the immobile Miss Henderson's side. She extended her hand in such a way as to check the embrace which her lover was about to bestow upon her, and to call forth his exclamation.

"How do you do, Oscar?" said Miss Henderson in flat-toned response to his lengthy greeting. "It didn't matter at all, your being late." She glanced casually at the mantel clock. "I hope," politely, "that you are quite rested?"

"Quite." Oscar was terse. He studied her charming, pale face, which wore this morning a touch of weariness, almost of sadness. "What is the matter, Aline? Aren't you going to let me kiss you?"

Miss Henderson flushed a little as though such brutal directness hurt her sensibilities.

"I'd rather not, if you don't mind," she answered.

"But I do mind—enormously. What is the matter?" He seated himself opposite her and regarded her with a puzzled frown.

She made a slight, weary gesture. "Must we talk about it—now? Isn't it enough that I'd—rather not?"



*"Did you never"—Aline averted her gaze—"kiss her?"*

'Not for me. I'm no mind reader. Are you so angry with me because I overslept, and kept you waiting?"

"Oh—that!" She dismissed that offense as remote, unnoticed, infinitely trivial.

"Then what? I'm the same man of whom you took leave on Thursday night"

Aline flushed hotly at the reminder, and Oscar's face lit hopefully, triumphantly.

"Your sister Gertrude was in town yesterday," announced the lady when she had beaten down the recollection of Thursday night.

"Was she? Well?" But Oscar's voice was charged with sudden gloom.

"She came to see me, stayed to dinner, and spent the evening. Mr. Morgan called for her at eleven, and they went out to Montclair on a late train. It's the first time I've seen her since we told the families we were engaged."

"Well? Wasn't Gertrude sufficiently cordial? Or didn't you like her as a sample of the family? Didn't she think her brother was playing in great luck?"

"Oh, yes, she was glad, very glad." Aline's voice was guiltless of inflection, and her gaze was directed dispassionately toward the windows across the room. "She was particularly happy about it, because, she said, it definitely marked the end of your infatuation for Mrs. Trevelyan."

There was a brief pause. Then Oscar spoke.

"As an only child, Aline, you cannot appreciate the feelings of a brother who would dearly like to strangle one of his four sisters. What did Gertrude mean by that infernal rot?"

"I don't think, Oscar, that ugly language helps the situation at all." Aline fairly swooped upon a cause of offense that could not be imputed to personal jealousy. Pride might forbid her to be violent because of her lover's tardiness in seeking her that morning, or because of his prior attachments, but she could and would fight hotly for the purity of the English tongue, for the decencies of verbal intercourse. "It's childish and worse! I had hoped that we were both sufficiently sane, sufficiently self-controlled to say what there was to say without rancor, without recriminations—"

"And what is there to say?" Oscar's manner was dogged with premonition of coming conflict.

Aline looked at him with large-eyed wonder. "Surely you know, Oscar," she answered, with exquisite gentleness. "Of course you do not expect things to go on with us as—as we had intended?"

"Do you mean to tell me that you are going to throw me over because my sister Gertrude is a chattering, feather-brained woman, and because she came gabbling to you?"

"You know, of course, Oscar, that that is not the reason." Aline was still divinely gentle and patient, now with a little hint of weariness in her manner. "It is not because your sister told me; it is not even"—magnanimously—"that you had loved another woman before me."

"Loved your grandmother!" cried the ribald Mr. Pembroke.

"It is not that I have any small-minded distaste for being regarded as a picker-up of the scraps which that very attractive widow, Mrs. Trevelyan, has thrown away. But, Oscar, there could be no happiness for us, no peace, without perfect trust. I cannot trust you again. You have not been honest with me."

"Honest! For Heaven's sake, Aline, you didn't consider it a necessary prelude to an engagement for a man to sit down and carefully enumerate the times and occasions on which he has made a fool of himself?"

"Oscar." Aline's voice was a sigh. "I am very tired. I have been thinking of this all night—"

"My poor dear!"

"Don't, please!" Repudiation of his pity and his proprietorship infused a sudden vigor into her manner. Then she drooped again. "I really don't feel equal to going over the whole affair with you now. If you had told me frankly, in the beginning, I should have forgiven it—I mean," correcting herself quickly, "I should not even have thought it any of my present concern. It was the concealment, the lack of confidence, of candor. Is deception a possible foundation for married happiness—the sort of married happiness we were to know?" In her delicate emphasis of the pronoun there was an infinitude of reproach.

"My dear girl, there was no more deception in my not telling you anything about Mrs. Trevelyan than there was in my not enumerating the partners I used to have at the prep school dances, or the trips I've taken to Chicago, or the number of shoe shines or poached eggs I've had. Mrs. Trevelyan was never anything to me—in the

sense in which we are something to each other," he added, as a clause of safety.

"Did you never"—Aline averted her gaze—"kiss her?"

"Oh, come, Aline! That sort of thing is unworthy of you."

"You are afraid to answer me!"

"I am amazed to hear you, that's all. Suppose I had, what sort of a cad should I be to go around talking about it?"

"It seems to me that there is a difference between telling your fiancée a fact which she must know in order to determine her future relations with you and 'going around talking about it.' This is not your club, you know." Aline spoke in a patient, superior tone.

"Do you mean to say," seriously, "that you would allow the fact of my having made love, of sorts, to a woman before I met you to weigh against all that you know of my love for you, and all that you have confessed of yours for me?"

The masculine directness of Oscar's manner was not to Aline's liking.

"There is no use in your trying to turn the tables upon me," she announced coldly. "I have stated all that I have to state. You did not deal openly with me. You did not tell me of your infatuation for a woman before you fell in love with me—an infatuation serious enough to cause your sister concern! You— Oh, what is the use of my talking like this? I had made up my mind not to enter into recriminations, into bickerings, not to degrade everything by vulgar quarreling, but just to tell you that I knew, and that I could not go on with our engagement. Of course," she ended innocently, "if you could assure me that your sister Gertrude was mistaken, that you had only an ordinary friendship for Mrs. Trevelyan, that you never made love to her, that would be different."

"I've told you a million times that I never loved any woman until I met you. If you don't believe that, what is the sense of my adding a specific million-and-first denial?"

"You are evading the question. You can't deny that you made love to her." But she waited hopefully. No denial came. Her face grew pale in the effort to repress signs of her disappointment. "I knew it," she said. "And I respect you for not persisting in the regulation untruth. How many billions of men, do you suppose, have salvaged their consciences for their falsehoods in saying that they never loved before by adding mentally, 'like this'?"

"I'm not going to take your dismissal like this, you know," said Oscar. "Moreover, you don't expect me to. I'll go off now, but I'll come around later, when you've had time to get over Gertrude's fliberty-gibbet talk."

"Do you forget," inquired Aline coldly, "why you are here this morning? Do you forget what we have to do?"

"By Jove, I did forget. We're lunching with the Morris at Yonkers, and we were going to walk up from Van Cortlandt Park. But don't you want to call that off? You're in no mood for social things."

"I do not intend to make the shadow that has fallen across my own life an excuse for rudeness," announced Miss Henderson, in a manner of one aware of deserving canonization.

Oscar repressed a smile.

"Then we'll go, of course. And is it as a newly engaged pair, receiving congratulations and good wishes and complimentary free meals from their delighted friends, or as two separate and individual derelicts on the shores of courtship, that we make our appearance?"

"You are humorous," retorted Aline angrily. "Personally I have no desire to embarrass Gwendolin Morris by obtruding my disagreeable private affairs upon her."

"Then we are to appear at her house in our original rôles of the—most blessed man and the dearest woman in the world?" Real feeling triumphed over the mockery in Oscar's voice.

"If you think you could sustain so trying a part for two hours," answered the girl, her color high. "But please don't misunderstand me. Our engage-





*And to Oscar Pembroke's fancy, the piquant, jeering face of Mrs. Trevelyan laughed over the banister at them.*

ment is broken—over. I only consent to this to save Gwen's luncheon from being a—a——”

“Funeral feast. Very well, my dear. I'm only too glad to appear, as long as you let me, in the original part. Are you sure”—he approached and tried to look into her downcast eyes—“that we'll never be again what we are to seem at your friend's?”

“Quite sure,” replied Miss Henderson, with unexpected firmness.

“Then will you grant me one favor?”

“Certainly.”

“Thank you. Let us continue engaged from this moment until we return to New York after the luncheon. Don't put me off among the casual, indifferent strangers from now until luncheon, then resume me as a lover,

darling—don't be angry, please!—and then drop me again. Let's be engaged, and take our walk, and play the part as prettily as we know how until after the Morris'es' front door closes upon us. Please! We have such good times, when we're engaged.”

Aline hesitated, looked at him, flushed, wavered, and finally said:

“I am sure I should much rather that the memory of our last day together should be lovely.”

“Bless you!” cried Oscar, interpreting the remark as a concession to his wishes, and kissing her hand with more warmth than is usually put into that ceremonious salute.

Then they went out of the room and down the broad stone steps of Miss Henderson's ancestral dwelling. And to Oscar Pembroke's fancy, the piquant,



*"Let's have the day for our very own, our last one!"*

jeering face of Mrs. Trevelyan laughed over the banister at them, and the click of her absurd, high-heeled slippers sounded on the pavement beside them—Mrs. Trevelyan, whom no one took seriously, who took no one seriously, but who knew the art of pleasing.

Perhaps Aline felt the fascinating widow's presence, too. It is certain that never in the months of their friendship and the weeks of their engagement had she taken pains to be so delightful a companion. It was as though she said to her shadowy rival: "Oh, he's yours. I won't take your hand-me-downs, my good woman! But before you have him back, he shall have a recollection to measure all your charms by, a standard of happy days to show him how poor the substitute you offer!"

Generally, there was a good deal of seriousness about Aline—she used her wit, her gift of repartee, her mirth, sparingly, as though they were less worthy attributes than the serenity of temper, the largeness of mind, upon

which she prided herself. But to-day instinct, or the shadowy mocker with them, taught her to be gay, and companionable.

In the big park, glowing with all the jeweled colors of the fall, arched by the warm blue of October noon, odorous with leaves and the faint fragrance of earth, some intoxication seemed to enter her. "She, a fascinator?" her spirit seemed to spur her on. "Let us see!" And into the perfection of her comradeship with Oscar she injected some subtler wine. It seemed to him that he had never seen her so charming, so graceful, so light of foot, so delicate and swift and sure of motion. They tramped and talked and laughed, and once she threw herself upon a knoll to rest. There was a warm color in her cheeks, and her hazel eyes had the lights of gold-colored gems.

"I wish the Morriszes were in—China," observed Oscar, obviously changing the designation at which he wished the Morriszes, out of politeness to their friend, Miss Henderson.

"So do I," she returned unexpectedly. "In China—or elsewhere?"

"Aline!" He looked along the empty road below them, and caught at her hand, in its dogskin glove. The wrist was bare where the glove was turned back. He kissed the inch of white skin visible. "Aline! Let's cut them! Let's have the day for our very own—our last one!" he added hastily.

"I wish we could," said Aline, as one who studies possibilities. The phantom of Mrs. Trevelyan, who had heard Aline's noble resolution not to let her own shadowed existence serve as an excuse for rudeness, must have chuckled. "But I don't see how we could manage it, do you?"

"Of course I do. If you'll let me tell a small, insignificant fib?"

Aline, the truth-teller, surely inspired by the lawless spirit of the widow, replied lightly:

"If you can think of one that isn't too appallingly, obviously untruthful!"

"You do injustice to my intelligence. Come, we will run quickly down to the golf house, or the restaurant, or wherever they have a telephone; and I will explain all to Mrs. Morris' satisfaction."

Aline's natural disposition made a faint effort to assert itself.

"It's a horrid thing to do," she protested. And, then, the inner voice remarked: "Which will linger longer in his soul, to torment him with visions of happiness lost—a luncheon at Gwen Morris', or a perfect October day with me? Which would the Widow Trevelyan, that notorious snarer of man, counsel?"

"Oh, come on! Let's do it!" cried Aline. "When I write her to-morrow that our engagement is off, she'll understand."

"To be sure. I hadn't thought of that," agreed Oscar civilly. "Meantime, me for the telephone. Promise not to ask what I tell her?"

"All right, if only you get us out of it."

He came back from the booth, smiling. She devoured his face curiously, but gathered nothing from it.

"And, now, where are we going to eat? I'm as hungry as a bear, aren't you?"

"I am hungry, though for more things than any bill of fare in this country will offer us!" He looked down upon her ardently.

"You're flirting with me! You mustn't. It isn't in our contract."

"No, but what I hunger for, long for, is in our contract, if only it could be fulfilled upon the highroad. I'm still engaged to you, you know, and you haven't let me kiss you this morning!"

A party of boys with bats and balls went over a slope, and disappeared from view. Three Italians, sauntering by with friendly eyes, dropped behind the same rise in the ground. The bright autumn world was empty, except for the two. Had she not once heard of some one who had seen the shameless Widow Trevelyan letting the poor Conners boy kiss her behind the big elm at the tenth tee at the country club? Aline raised daring, shy, defiant eyes toward her affianced-for-the-day.

"Well, then," she whispered, and, for a second, the touch of eager lips against her own, blotted out even the thought of her own stupendous, shocking impropriety.

"Darling, darling!" he said. "Surely, you don't mean—after this——"

He broke off appealingly. Some golf players came along, with bags and clubs.

"Let's get out of this," impatiently suggested Mr. Pembroke, evidently regarding the general use of the city's playground as an unwarrantable intrusion upon his private rights. "Come, I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll make this a memorable day, my lady! I'll telephone for the governor's car to meet us out here on Jerome Avenue—he's away—and when it comes I'll send Ramsey back home, and I will run it myself out to that roadhouse at Greenwich, I've told you of. Can you sustain life an hour longer without food?"

Aline thought that she could, and by and by they were speeding across coun-



*Aline, still in her trance, smiled faintly.*

try. But the spirit of Mrs. Trevelyan was with them still. It spurred Aline to graceful coquetties, such as normally she despised. "He shall see, for once, that all which she can give a man is the mere small change of my purse!" she thought to herself. "The mere small change I have thought too well of him to offer before." And at that excuse for her conduct, for her words and her looks and her soft laughter, all designed to lure, the phantom that rode between them laughed with silent merriment.

They lunched, and they cruised through the autumnal country all the short, bright afternoon. Twilight fell early—the autumn twilight that suggests the drawn curtains of homes, the ruddy lights of hearths, intimacy, love shut in to firelit happiness.

"If only we were going home, by and by, to our own place!" he said.

the office. Those were the things we were waiting for!"

"And see what we got by it!" gloomily remarked Oscar. "I lose you. If I had had sense, I should have carried you off the night you said you'd marry me, and married you then, willy-nilly, Young Lochinvar style. Why didn't I?"

"I wonder why," she sighed.

He drove the car slowly through the dusk.

"Our last day is almost at an end," he told her. "Ah, Aline—doesn't our quarrel—our silly, foolish, little quarrel—seem long ago and far away and unreal? Does anything in the world seem real except that we are together? Do you believe that I ever loved any other woman but you?"

"No," she murmured.

"See all the lights in all the homes, see the panes shining messages into the

"Tired and drowsy and peaceful from the open air, to our own fires and our own books."

"Don't, please!"

"But we are still engaged. Until the end of this day I have the right to talk as my whole heart cries out to me to talk. Oh, Aline, to go to our own home, never to be separated again! What were we waiting for—back there when we used to be engaged, I mean?"

"I forget," she murmured dreamily. "It wasn't anything very important, was it? You wanted the Chicago contracts signed, so that you wouldn't have to keep going out there. And I wanted—a trousseau. And you wanted your rise in

night. And every home was built on love, but no love so dear, so deep, so many-sided as ours! Aline, you aren't going to keep that cruel word you said this morning, you aren't going to shut me away from you, are you?"

"Oh, I meant to; I meant what I said! But—it all does seem far away and unreal, like a dream."

"We will go on being engaged; say it, dearest."

"You're hypnotizing me. I meant what I said this morning. And perhaps I'll mean the same thing to-morrow morning. But now—" She turned toward him with a gesture of surrender, and he felt her shoulder against his in the gloom.

"Bless you, my darling! But you shall not have a chance to change your mind again, in the morning."

There was a little stone church ahead of them on the right, the windows of which shone brightly into the early evening. Two carriages stood before its entrance. As the automobile drew near, the door opened, and in a broad band of light, a humble wedding party came into view—a white-clad girl and a man with her, awkward in unaccustomed black, and their attendants laughing and excited. They ran into the two waiting hacks and drove away.

"There is no question about her changing her mind in the morning, is there? Aline, will you—won't you? Think what it means—no more waiting, no more misunderstanding, doubt, disbelief. No flummery of bridesmaids and ribbons! No gossiping Gertrudes. No excitement. No hideous nuisance of the license bureau, with lines of men and women staring at you."

"Do I have to go there, myself?" cried Aline.

"You surely do, in our town. But now we are here—here in the convenient next State. No presents that we didn't want. No—"

"Oh, Oscar, I couldn't. Think what Aunt Martha would say!"

"Think of all that she is going to say when you try to make out your lists. Think of all that she'll say about your bridesmaids. Think of the

enormous number of words Aunt Martha can utter on any given subject, unless one heads her off. Come on, dearest, be a sport! Spoil the show for the people who think of it as a show. There's a church across there, and that must be the parsonage adjoining it. There'll be a wise, old clergyman inside, with benevolent eyes and a sympathetic smile. He will say to you: 'You're right, my dear child, to run no more risks of tempers, doubts, or jealousies.'"

"I wasn't jealous. It was only the—lack of frankness," protested the girl.

"Of course I know that. I meant my jealousies. Come on. Let's go and find the benevolent clergyman."

She made no answer, seeming steeped in a deep dream. So he steered the machine to the curb before the suburban church.

The benevolent old clergyman turned out to be thirty and an athlete. He was also the younger brother of one of Oscar's college friends. He called his wife to the library to witness the ceremony, along with a rosy-cheeked maid.

Aline, still in her trance, smiled faintly. And she understood very little, until the clergyman was saying to her: "Mrs. Pembroke, I wish you every happiness in the world."

"It was the best last-day-of-an-engagement I ever saw!" announced Oscar, driving the machine lawlessly home to communicate his glad tidings.

"Hasn't it been?" said Aline vaguely. "Oscar, what do you suppose ever possessed me—me—to do such a thing?"

"Love, love, love, my sweetest," he told her.

But when the news was out, the vivacious Mrs. Trevelyan laughed.

"It's much the best way to do it," she said, "though I always supposed Miss Henderson too conventional for such a sensible performance. Me, I eloped both times I was married!"

It is not on record that the spirit of Mrs. Trevelyan ever played the familiar again to Mrs. Oscar Pembroke. But Mr. Oscar Pembroke has never been heard to bewail the fact.



## SILK O' THE CORN

By Arthur Guiterman

A DROWSY daze of vibrant haze  
 Bedims the azure hills,  
 The meadows nod with goldenrod,  
 The milkweed breaks and spills.  
 Old willows dream above a stream  
 That twines its silver arms  
 About the vales and pleasant swales  
 Of kindly little farms.  
 Light breezes lift the pollen drift  
 With sun-warm breath of loam.  
 In endless rhyme the crickets chime  
 A song of Harvest Home:

"Silk o' the corn, tassel o' the fir,  
 And the soft, new green o' the chestnut burr!"

The woodmice creep, the rabbits leap  
 On checkered forest lawns.  
 The wild fowl wake a shadowed lake  
 Where drink the dappled fawns.  
 The chubby bear forsakes his lair  
 To look where berries grow.  
 The squirrels rove the hazel grove,  
 The muskrat dives below.  
 The partridge runs; the woodchuck suns  
 His coat beside the wall.  
 By marsh and rill the crickets trill  
 Their litany of fall:

"Silk o' the corn, tassel o' the fir,  
 And the soft, new green o' the chestnut burr!"





# The Great Conspirator

By Howard Fielding

ILLUSTRATED BY F. X. CHAMBERLIN

[We consider this one of the best mystery stories written in recent years. It will appear in six installments in this magazine.—THE EDITORS.]

## SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

Mrs. Frances Seabury, a woman of enormous wealth, who has sunk every other feeling in her financiering, lives with her two nephews, Jack Deering and Arthur Seabury, and a daughter of an old friend, Sylvia Leland. These are to inherit her money, but are kept on a meagre allowance owing to the parsimony of Mrs. Seabury, with whom relations are constantly strained. Mrs. Seabury's secretary, a young lady named Alice Warden, becomes close friends with the other young people, and Deering falls in love with her. Arthur Seabury and Deering speculate against the expressed wish of their aunt, get on the wrong side of the market, and are on the edge of a failure which will necessarily come to the attention of Mrs. Seabury. At this juncture, the four go to Cape May to spend the summer. On the night of their arrival the hotel flagstaff is struck by lightning. At the moment of uproar, Alice Warden, who had gone into Mrs. Seabury's room by mistake, is shot in the throat, so that she cannot speak, and dies, after making an unintelligible attempt to write the murderer's name. Jack's revolver, of peculiar pattern, is found to be missing; and Dalton, a servant, who had professed his affection for Alice, also disappears. During the excitement Mrs. Seabury's attorney comes to report the loss of a quantity of securities entrusted to him. No trace of the murderer is found, and Mrs. Seabury assumes the responsibility of directing the suspicion away from her three charges, who were the only persons near the scene at the moment. The chief of police, Quinn, arrives and starts his investigations. Sylvia is detected concealing a key which she finds in the room where the murder was committed. Deering produces the bullet—which does not fit his missing revolver. Mrs. Seabury discusses the bribing of the coroner and tells him that Ethel Lockwood, a former fiancée of Dr. Clinton, in whom Arthur has taken an interest, was the woman on the lower veranda. Deering and Seabury meet Lynde on their way to Clinton's office. He poses as a newspaper correspondent, but, as they find out later from another reporter, is really a tool of Mrs. Seabury's. He tells of the story he has sent to the papers implicating Miss Lockwood. At Clinton's office, they find chief of police Quinn waiting. He tells Arthur that a man, answering the description of the missing Dalton, sent an express package to Marjorie Vannard at Philadelphia. After Quinn's departure, Dr. Clinton arrives and declares that Miss Lockwood can give an alibi. Seabury goes out to get Jack Deering and Clinton slips away. Deering and Seabury return to the hotel, where they find in the earth at the end of the veranda the prints of a woman's shoes, which have been partly obliterated by those of another woman. In addition, there are the marks of two men's shoes. They go to Bud Burke, one of the hotel servants, to find out what he knows. He claims to be able to identify the woman who was on the veranda. After Deering promises him a thousand dollars, he points out a young lady on the hotel porch, whom he says is named Marjorie Vannard. A few moments later, she disappears. Arthur becomes convinced that Jack and Sylvia are keeping something from him, but they stoutly deny it. He delivers a message from Lynde to his aunt asking for an interview at three o'clock, which she declines. Sylvia and Jack tell him that this is only a notification of an appointed hour, and the three await developments.

## CHAPTER XIII.

AT a quarter before three precisely, Doctor Clinton came to Mrs. Seabury's conference. There was no one missing then except Sylvia. Mrs. Seabury had already tried in vain to summon her by telephone; she now went personally to rap at Sylvia's door, but there was no response.

"You must find her, Arthur," said she, returning; "find her immediately."

I accepted the quest with a right good will, for my anxiety was now unendurable. Clinton wore the countenance of a man going to the gallows—a soldier who does not fear death, but would prefer another method; whose reluctance is a kind of shame; and though he had said in answer to Mrs. Seabury's question that it was two hours and more since he had seen

Sylvia, I suspected that he might be well informed as to the reason for her absence.

I went out upon the veranda, and as far as Sylvia's room. The Venetian blinds of thin metal were closed at the lower parts of the windows, but when I called her name softly one of the blinds was instantly opened.

"I knew she would send you," Sylvia said. "This was the way to see you privately before the conference."

"You are coming?"

"Yes. Is Doctor Clinton there?"

"He came just now. What has happened to him? He looks like death."

"I can't tell you all," she said. "We have but little time. This is the chief point: Doctor Clinton lied to me. I could hear Mrs. Seabury's voice in every word he said."

"Has she bought him?"

"No; she has frightened him. The man is utterly terrified."

"Sylvia," said I, "can he have done it?"

"Killed Alice? Oh, impossible! No, no; it's not that."

"Why do you say impossible? Some one did it. What was he there for? There was something secret in his errand. He has never explained——"

"He mustn't do it. We mustn't think of that."

"Sylvia, do you know who did it? Or strongly suspect? I can't get it out of my mind that you and Jack are hiding something from me. You seem so sure of every person's innocence. Take Wickham, for instance. Jack doesn't know even the man's defense; he knows nothing at all about it. And yet he repels the suspicion of Wickham's guilt as if it were the grossest injustice to mention such a possibility. And now you do the same for Clinton."

"But there was no motive."

"No motive? In this world as it is to-day? Why did Clinton go to Mrs. Seabury and demand that she should pay you a great sum of money? I hate to mention such a thing, but isn't it obvious that he hoped to share it? He failed; but there was one sure way to succeed. He asked her to pay you a few hundreds of thousands, perhaps. He knew that her death would throw twenty millions into your hands. Mrs. Seabury stood in his way doubly, blocking his path to love and riches. It's awful to accuse the man; but it is mere folly, Sylvia, to say he had no motive."

"I did not love him. I had refused him."

"Clinton's not the man to stop at one refusal," said I.

"We waste time," she cried. "He did not do it. What does he fear? What hold has she upon him?"

"I don't know. What did he say to you? That may give some clue."

"He told me he had been led to believe that my father was not poor when he died; that there were stocks and bonds in Mrs. Seabury's hands, and that she kept them for herself. But

Mrs. Seabury had proved that there was no truth in this."

"That seems to be a lie on its face," I admitted; "and you can't be blamed for thinking that Aunt Frances made him tell it. Never in this world did Clinton go to her demanding restitution of securities which your father had turned over to her. She doesn't do things that way, and Clinton knows it."

"I would give worlds to learn the truth, and I shall! This struggle is only beginning."

"Think what it has cost already, Sylvia."

She uttered a quick cry, and covered her eyes with her hands.

"Oh, don't, don't!" she whispered. "I mustn't think of Alice. And it isn't true that she has died for this. There is but one who could have wished her dead, perhaps——"

"Aunt Frances! And you thought of her, Sylvia, in the first moments."

"No, no; you are utterly wrong. You did not understand."

"I understand one thing clearly," said I; "that Alice is dead. When we have seen her laid to rest, I wish we might leave all these sorrows here and flee to the world's end. It's a coward's wish, for a man who still loves his country. Yet I would go."

"When I have had justice for my father I will go anywhere," said she. "But I will have that first."

Our time was spent, and we must join the company in Mrs. Seabury's room. Upon our entry the rat-faced lawyer hastened to post his clerk on the veranda for sentry against eavesdroppers, while one of Mrs. Seabury's underlings, brought down from Philadelphia, mounted guard in the hall, with the locked door behind him. By my watch it lacked just one minute of three.

"It has seemed advisable," said Cushing, the lawyer, "that the important witnesses, who will be called upon by the coroner certainly, and by a court probably, to testify as to the murder of Alice Warden, should assemble here this afternoon for the purpose of receiving some preliminary instruction as

to the legal aspect of the matter in which they are thus involved. Unfortunately, there are two persons whom we would very much like to see, but whose presence we are unable to command. I refer to William Dalton and to the woman, name unknown to me, who was observed approaching the scene of the crime immediately before its commission, and can be proved to have fled immediately afterward."

He paused upon this statement, and swept the company with a glance, as if to intimate that any who might be possessed of information relative to the woman of the unknown name would better speak at once. As there was no response, he proceeded:

"Mrs. Seabury has done me the honor to retain me as her adviser; and at her request I offer my services to all of you. I would suggest that we go over the evidence, so to speak——"

He was interrupted by a subdued knocking at the door. Mrs. Seabury made a hasty gesture commanding us all to keep our places, while she herself should answer the summons.

"Well?" said she. "What is it?"

The voice that responded seemed to be forced through the keyhole by a very strong pressure of air.

"It's the coroner," said the voice. "He wants to see you."

Mrs. Seabury turned to Cushing, who applied two fingers of his left hand to his brow, and seemed to ponder deeply.

"It would be my advice that you should admit him," said he. "You'll have to go through with it eventually, and my presence may be an advantage."

"What does he mean by coming here without any warning?" said Mrs. Seabury impatiently. "Some people seem to regard disrespect for me as a species of honesty. They are superior to money—when it belongs to somebody else and they can't get it. I have heard of this fellow."

She hesitated a moment, and then opened the door, disclosing to our view a square-faced, heavy man, with a shock of iron-gray hair and black tufts

of eyebrows, under which were blue eyes, dull and steady. He was very loosely clad—his trousers were vast, shapeless bags—and he held a dusty soft hat crushed in his right hand, his powerful fingers gripping it around the middle.

"You are Doctor Ritter, I suppose," said Mrs. Seabury.

"Yes," said he, and striding into the room, without looking at her, he took the seat which she had previously occupied, and laid some papers on the table.

I placed a chair for Mrs. Seabury between Cushing and myself, and she sat very straight in it, and glowered at the intruder. Ritter, meanwhile, behaved absolutely as if he were alone; but after he had arranged the papers to his satisfaction, he looked up at Clinton, and said: "Good day, doctor," in a voice that began with a peculiar growl in the throat, but was clear enough after it had got well started.

Clinton returned the salutation in a way which let me understand that there was smouldering animosity between the two.

"This is an informal preliminary inquiry into the matter of the death of Alice Warden," said the coroner. "The cause of death I have ascertained to be a gunshot wound which she received at the hands of some party unknown. Certain persons were present or near by at the time of this occurrence. I have questioned some of them already"—and his dull eyes moved from Jack to Sylvia—"others I have not"; and they moved on to me, and then to Mrs. Seabury. "But I have gathered enough to enable me to place you all pretty accurately, I guess; and your locations at the fatal moment I have set down on a diagram, or plan, drawn roughly by myself. I shall offer it to each of you in turn, and you will please note whether your positions are correctly marked down."

Mrs. Seabury gave Cushing a glance out of the corner of her eyes.

"There's no objection that I see," said the lawyer.

"Well, suppose you did see one?"

demanded Ritter. "What would happen?"

"I should state it."

"And what would happen then?" said Ritter, in a louder tone.

"I cannot venture to foretell the future," answered the lawyer smoothly. "I represent the law and not the prophets."

"Hum," said Ritter. "I could foretell some people's future for ten years or more, if I had legal evidence about their past. I'm that much of a prophet. Doctor Clinton, will you oblige me by casting your eye on this?"

And he laid before Clinton a diagram and key, whereof a copy is herewith presented:

ever," said Ritter. "Perhaps you looked through?"

"Merely at the sky—the lightning."

"You saw nobody?"

Clinton slowly shook his head.

"No one passed that door while you were there," said Sylvia. "You are sure?"

"I saw nobody," responded Clinton.

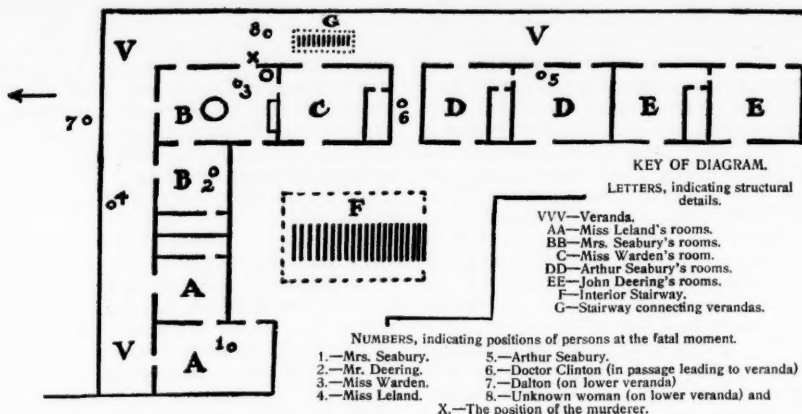
"Some one may have passed, crouching down, below the level of the glass."

"That seems absurd," said Sylvia.

"The glass is quite low."

"If you intend to conduct this examination, Miss Leland," said Ritter unpleasantly, "I will withdraw."

"You tempt me, sir," said Sylvia quietly, "but I lack experience."



Clinton studied the coroner's chart with extremely close attention, shutting his eyes from time to time to test his memory of its details. At last he pushed it slowly back across the table, and turned his face toward Mrs. Seabury, whom he regarded steadily for some seconds.

"Any corrections?" asked Ritter.

"No," responded Clinton, speaking with difficulty after a brief delay.

"You were looking toward the veranda?"

"Yes; but the door at the end of the passage was closed."

"The upper part of it is glass, how-

Mrs. Seabury seemed to enjoy this, and Cushing shook with inward laughter. Ritter, after a momentary display of irritation, turned to Clinton.

"You say you were in the passage when the shot was fired. Did you hear it?"

"I heard a sound," replied Clinton.

"I did not know what it was, nor give it any attention. There was a great deal of noise at that time."

"Where did the shot seem to be?"

Clinton hesitated.

"So far as I can remember," he replied at last, "I had an indefinite impression that something had fallen in

the room beside me, the one marked C on your diagram."

"Alice's room," said Mrs. Seabury. "No one was there at that time."

"The impression," resumed Clinton, "was shocked out of my mind almost instantly by the violent peal of thunder which followed. And I think," he added, "that we should all consider the probability—the certainty, indeed—that our memories of preceding sounds must have been very considerably affected by that tremendous crash."

"Scared you a little, eh?" said Ritter. "Thought you'd been struck by lightning?"

"The effect was greater than I should have supposed," responded Clinton, in the same monotonous voice that he had used from the first. "I was partially stunned, and I remained leaning against the wall, at about the point indicated on your chart, until I heard Mr. Deering's voice. I then went into the hall, and subsequently into the larger of the two rooms marked B, the corner sitting room. There I found Miss Warden lying on the floor."

"In what position?"

"Her head was close by the table in the centre of the room. Her feet were toward the door communicating with the room marked C."

"Proceed."

"There was no light in the room except what came from an electric lamp in the court, and from the hall. The latter served me fairly well for a few moments while I examined Miss Warden's wound, but a draught of air closed the door. By that time I had checked the hemorrhage by digital pressure, and was of course unable to move. At my request Mr. Deering made another attempt to turn on the lights, but failed. He then opened the door, and presently Doctor Bridgman and Brice, the clerk, arrived. Miss Leland and Mr. Seabury were already present, having come in from the bedroom, which they had entered by way of the window from the veranda, I suppose."

"Did Miss Warden say anything to you?"

"Nothing intelligible. She was not fully conscious."

There was a brief silence, and then Ritter took up an envelope from among his papers, and drew forth a bullet wrapped in cotton.

"I got this from Chief Quinn," he said. "Did you find it?"

"Yes," answered Clinton.

"When and where?"

"Shortly after Miss Warden's death; on the floor near the north window of the larger room marked B on your chart."

"What did you do with it?"

"I gave it to Mr. Deering."

"Under what circumstances?"

"I met him near my house. He asked me for the bullet, and I gave it to him."

"You were coming from your house, and Mr. Deering was going toward it. Is that right?"

"Yes," said Clinton.

"And he asked you for the bullet. What did he say?"

"He said that Mrs. Seabury had sent him to get it."

"Ah! So you'd told Mrs. Seabury that you had it?"

"Yes."

"Anybody else?"

"No."

"Did she ask you for it?"

"Yes; but I thought I'd better keep it until the proper time for turning it over to the authorities. Then I changed my mind."

The coroner looked intently into Clinton's face, and, slowly drawing a revolver from the side pocket of his coat, he laid it noisily upon the table.

"Is that yours?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Clinton. "How did you get it?"

"A friend of mine got it at your house."

"I would like to know your friend's name," said Clinton.

"Never mind his name. Does the bullet fit that revolver?"

"Yes. And it would fit several thousand others."

"You understand firearms pretty

well, don't you? Quite an expert, eh?"

"I am familiar with firearms."

The coroner searched among his documents, and drew forth a letter, which he tossed across to Clinton.

"Ever see that before?" he asked.

"Yes," answered Clinton, and his face suddenly flamed red.

"From Miss Warden, I believe," said Ritter. "Give it back to me."

It lay upon the table in front of Clinton, who had not touched it; he had merely glanced at the address upon the envelope. He now sat perfectly still, ignoring the coroner's request, and Ritter stretched forth a heavy hand, and drew back the letter, which he proceeded to read aloud. It ran thus:

"MY DEAR DOCTOR CLINTON: We shall be in Cape May to-morrow about six. Sylvia will endeavor to see you at the earliest possible moment after we arrive. You must see me first; it is absolutely necessary. I am convinced you do not realize how serious the trouble is. Sylvia is incensed against Mrs. Seabury to a degree that frightens me very much. My own part in this I regret from the bottom of my heart, but I can do nothing now. I am not strong enough to control Sylvia in the least. Some terrible thing will result, unless you are able to make her cease imagining the horrors that are torturing her to madness. I don't know what she believes, but it must be far worse than the truth. If it is only money that is in dispute, surely it is not worth such agony as this—not all the money in the world. Make her understand that this is a mere debt—it can't be anything else—and that her father was not wronged except as all men are who have less money than their adversaries. Above all, make her see that Mrs. Seabury was not responsible for anything that happened to Mr. Leland. I have talked with Mrs. Seabury about him, not letting her know why, and she has spoken of him in the kindest terms. I am sure that she was truly his friend, and that if he had listened to her advice, he would not have lost his property. She told me so herself.

"I am so anxious about this dreadful affair that I will take any means of seeing you before Sylvia does, so that I may tell you what we have made her suffer. Can you not come to the veranda, and speak with me at the window of my room? I will be there as soon as I am sure that the others have begun to dress for dinner. I know not how you feel toward me. I was utterly ignorant of what you were trying to persuade Mrs. Seabury to do. I was frightened by the little that I accidentally overheard; I told

Sylvia merely because I could not help it. I loved her so much, and I have brought this frenzy and anguish upon her. Perhaps I have ruined all your plans, and you are angry with me, but what I ask you to do is not for myself; it is for Sylvia, whom I have so much injured through my folly and miserable weakness. She will not share her burden with me, but strives to hide it, blinding me with a thousand kindnesses and acts designed to make me happy. No doubt I should be useless. I perceive more and more clearly that I am too weak for the world, a leaf on a torrent. It would be better if I were no longer tossed upon the surface, but were utterly submerged. That bitter stream is all made up of tears; it needs no more of mine."

Ritter read this letter in the most unfeeling voice that ever I heard, and the best-trained elocutionist could not have been more happily inspired. It was like hearing it read out by the angel of destiny. The inhuman coldness of that voice seemed to freeze Sylvia, and I was afraid for her, but lacked the readiness to act. At the close, however, Jack went round to that side of the table and drew in a chair between Sylvia's and Ritter's, and it was done so tactfully that the coroner had already moved to make more room before he realized that he was being coerced into a bit of gentle conduct. Perhaps on this account his preliminary growl was deeper when he spoke again.

"You admit having received this letter?" said he, and Clinton made a sign of affirmation.

"So it seems you had an appointment with that young lady at the fatal hour and place. You were on your way to keep that appointment, I suppose?"

"I was," said Clinton.

"And you didn't see anybody else approaching that particular spot?"

"I did not," said Clinton.

"Very well," rejoined Ritter. "We know, however, that a certain young woman was proceeding in that direction about that time. We know for a certainty that she got as far as the lower veranda. Subsequently, for some unexplained reason, she jumped off the far end of it. But what had she done in the meantime? Let's consider the case of that young woman for,





*"You are Dr. Ritter, I suppose," said Mrs. Seabury.*

a few moments. Mr. Seabury, will you be kind enough to identify this letter?"

He astounded me by producing from his pile of papers a letter which I had written to Edith Lockwood about a week before. I had no choice but to admit the truth; and when I had done so Ritter opened the letter and read this sentence:

"We shall have the same rooms at the Eglinton that we had last year."

"Did you write that?" he asked.

"Yes," I replied.

"Which rooms did Miss Leland occupy last year?"

"Wait one moment, if you please," interposed Cushing. "Mr. Seabury, did you mean literally the same rooms for each person, or merely that the same portion of this house had been engaged for your party?"

"Now, wait while I speak," inter-

posed Ritter. "You will answer my questions, and nobody else's."

"Excuse me," said I. "You are exceeding your authority. You have no right to forbid me to answer the questions of my attorney." And at this Mrs. Seabury nodded in approval, and patted the sleeve of my coat. "I meant by that sentence, Mr. Cushing," I resumed, "that the same rooms had been reserved, as a whole."

"What rooms did Miss Leland occupy in this house last season?" demanded Ritter.

"Those marked B on your plan."

"Well," said he, "I guess it's clear enough what Miss Lockwood would have understood, and where she would have expected to find Miss Leland, if she came looking for her. Doctor Clinton, did you ever make Miss Lockwood a present of a revolver?"

Clinton looked at Cushing for help, but the lawyer remained silent, knowing well enough that the fact was susceptible of proof.

"Yes," answered Clinton.

"Of what calibre?"

"I don't remember," said Clinton, in a smothered voice; and then, struck suddenly by the folly of such an answer, he said: "Thirty-two."

Ritter tapped the bullet.

"This is a thirty-eight, isn't it?"

Clinton nodded, as if his head would fall into his lap; and Ritter marked his state with grim satisfaction.

"You have a servant at your house named Margaret Colby, haven't you?" said he.

"Yes."

"Well, I have heard from Margaret, through a friend of mine," Ritter resumed, "and I am informed that Margaret heard a sound in your office last evening which was like the discharge of a firearm. Twice, I think she heard it—muffled, but recognizable. Shortly afterward, she saw you go out. Was it then that you met Mr. Deering?"

"I suppose it must have been," said Clinton, rolling a wild eye toward Mrs. Seabury, as it seemed to me.

"And gave him this bullet?" bellowed Ritter.

Again Clinton's head fell forward.

"Have you any explanation to offer of the sounds heard by Margaret Colby?"

"There were no such sounds," answered Clinton. "I deny that any weapon was discharged—" His voice faded away.

"Will you swear," demanded Ritter, "that this is the actual bullet which you found on the floor of that room, or is it a substitute—"

"Oh, I object," interposed Cushing. "If this is a quasi-judicial proceeding, I must say that the testimony of Margaret Colby comes before us in a form too vague for any credence. It is hearsay twice removed, even by your own statement, Doctor Ritter."

"I ask this man to swear—"

"How can he swear in such a proceeding as this?" demanded Cushing, and a futile, pointless controversy ensued.

It was evident to us all, however, that Clinton would never be able to carry his story through. I was perfectly convinced that he had substituted one bullet for another, and I more than suspected that Jack knew it, and had known it from the first. There could be but one reason for these desperate expedients; they must have been undertaken for the purpose of saving Edith from a danger ten times greater than I had supposed it to be. Clinton had seen her since the tragedy; clearly he had not been summoned as a physician only, but as the one man who could be trusted, who would not, perhaps dared not, refuse his help in this desperate emergency. He must know the truth. He was trying to save Edith from suspicion, and beyond question he would fail. In a few minutes of this informal examination he had been reduced to a pitiable state, revealed as an accomplice after the fact, and hopelessly tangled in falsehood. It was obvious that Ritter put no faith in Clinton's story about the bullet, and that it would never stand accepted in any court. No judge, no jury would believe it; and the inevitable inference would be that Clinton had found the

bullet which, through his knowledge of such matters, he had recognized as one that must have come from Edith's revolver. It might not have been destroyed; I should not have been greatly surprised to see the coroner lay it upon the table alongside the substitute which Clinton had prepared. Ritter's hand was even now groping in his pocket, but he withdrew it empty, and turned to Jack, who at this moment addressed him.

"Doctor Ritter," said he, "have you heard that two women were seen on the lower veranda immediately before this crime was committed?"

The coroner's black tufts of eyebrows were sharply elevated as he demanded: "What's that, young man?"

"Isn't it true that two women were seen going out there?"

"It is not."

"I understood," said Jack gently, "that two different footprints——"

"That's another matter," interposed the coroner. "We can prove that only one woman went toward the scene of this crime."

"You mean toward the lower veranda on the front of this wing," Jack suggested.

"It's the same thing."

"Oh, not at all," rejoined Jack. "Not the least in the world. The woman who went out there had no more idea of ascending to the upper veranda than she had of climbing the flagpole."

"What do you mean by that?" demanded Ritter. "What do you know about it?"

"I know who she was, and why she went out there," answered Jack.

In the midst of the silence which followed this statement, I heard the faint sound of Clinton's breath rustling in his dry throat.

"I mention this fact with extreme reluctance," Jack resumed, "but you seem to make it necessary. The trend of your examination indicates that you believe Miss Edith Lockwood to have been the person. She was not. The young woman, whom several guests of this house saw, but none recognized, had merely sought shelter from the

rain. There were many women in the lower part of the hotel. They had gathered there, I suppose, in some alarm because of the storm; they preferred not to be alone. She whom I have mentioned did not care to mingle with this large company of strangers; she turned aside, therefore, and went out upon the deserted veranda. Very natural, it seems to me."

"And it was equally natural," said Ritter, "that she should jump off the other end. Yes, indeed."

"I think so," responded Jack quietly. "The only difficulty is that our attention has been fixed upon the murder of Miss Warden so firmly that we have failed to comprehend matters of less gravity. Sylvia, what was your first impulse after the flagpole was shattered?"

"Oh, to run," she answered; "to get away. I ran right into the side of the house, like a blind person, and fell; and I was there upon my knees when Arthur came to me."

"The other young woman had the same desire," said Jack. "When that thunderbolt descended almost upon her head, she ran for her life. She wouldn't have gone back for a bushel of diamonds. When she came to the end of the veranda, and found no steps, she jumped; and then she ran some more. That's all there is in this mysterious occurrence."

I could see that Ritter was completely taken aback by this account, so simply given. He uttered two or three growls, but no articulate speech followed them.

"You know who this young woman is, eh?" said he, at last.

"I do," said Jack.

"Well, who is she?"

"I decline to answer."

"You set yourself against my authority, do you?" demanded Ritter, bristling.

"No," said Jack, "I merely wait for you to exert it."

"I see—I see," said Ritter, nodding. "You would prefer to give me this name privately. Perhaps you're right, young man. And I'll say one thing; if

you're lying, you're as good a hand at it as I've encountered in many a long day."

"Thank you," responded Jack soberly. "It is pleasant for the young to have their capabilities discerned by those who are older and abler than themselves."

Ritter slowly gathered up his papers, pocketed Clinton's revolver, and got heavily up from his chair. For some seconds he stood leaning on the table, glowering across at Mrs. Seabury.

"If there's any conspiracy here, to shield anybody," said he, at last, "it will fetch up with a smash against a stone wall."

He tapped himself several times upon the breast, and then stalked out of the room.

"Extraordinary," said Cushing, and repeated the word with added emphasis. "A strange fellow, rude and aggressive, but very able—and dangerous," he added, "as dangerous as a grizzly bear."

Jack came over to shake hands with Clinton, which he did very heartily.

"Cheer up," said he. "We're all as anxious as you are to save Edith from any annoyance, and we're going to do it. I think I put a spoke in Ritter's wheel, all right. He's gone off into a corner to think it over."

Mrs. Seabury had now risen, and she went to Jack and put her hand upon his shoulder affectionately, while addressing Clinton.

"You got into very deep water," she said. "I will not pretend that I have any sympathy for you, but I have a good deal for Miss Lockwood. On her account I advise you to consult with Mr. Cushing, so that you may be better prepared when you are questioned again. Mr. Cushing will walk over to your house with you."

At this, the lawyer crossed to them and said: "You can support this story, Mr. Deering, of course?"

"Afoot or horseback," answered Jack, "with spear, with axe, or with sword. I am willing to meet all comers, Coroner Ritter preferred."

Clinton, in a kind of trance, shook

hands with Jack again, and then departed in the care of Cushing. Meanwhile, nobody had asked Jack a single question as to the identity of the girl, nor did Mrs. Seabury touch upon that subject after Clinton's departure. She quaintly complimented Jack upon his conduct, as if she fully understood it; though I had thought, when he began to tell his story to Ritter, that Mrs. Seabury was no less surprised than the coroner. It now seemed to be her policy, however, to treat the incident as closed temporarily, and she did not even show a wish for a private conference with Jack. We three were permitted to depart together, and then, indeed, Jack had to face a rapid-fire battery of questions. Had he meant Miss Vannard? Had she consented to come forward? Was she really there? Would Jack give her name to Ritter? "Don't you understand?" said he. "Nobody will ask me for any name. Ritter doesn't want it. He has played his scene, and earned his money."

"His money?"

"Aunt Frances' money, if you prefer," said Jack. "He was acting for her, absolutely under her instructions. Lynde fixed him; that was the meaning of the message about three o'clock. It was arranged that Ritter should burst in upon us and frighten Clinton out of his skin. And Ritter certainly did it. He had Clinton completely at his mercy."

"But how?" I demanded. "Does Clinton believe that Edith did it? How can he think so?"

"I don't know," said Jack. "It's sure, however, that Clinton believes that Edith had something to do with Alice's death. She didn't, of course; and Clinton is wholly deceived. But Aunt Frances understands his position and is playing upon his fears. She would have jumped in and saved him, if I hadn't. I don't know how she would have done it, but I know she had some plan. That's her bargain with him; she is to save Edith, and Clinton is to cease making trouble between Sylvia and Aunt Frances. Now, it is important that we should know

the truth. We must discover just what Clinton knows, just what he saw, just what he did. And I'm going to get it out of him. I made up my mind to that while he was telling his story. I perceived that I'd got to get in ahead of Aunt Frances, and I did. For once in her life she ran second. And although she will persuade Clinton that I was merely acting on her orders, she can't wholly nullify his gratitude to me. Through that I shall gain his confidence, and save the whole situation."

"But the girl," I persisted. "Was it Miss Vannard?"

"My boy, I don't know any more about that matter than you do. I haven't mentioned Miss Vannard's name, and I shan't. Nobody will ask me. I invented my story on the spur of the moment to get those people out of trouble, and the tale served its purpose, and there's an end of it. What remains now is my hold on Clinton, and by means of that I'll save the man himself from his present misery; I'll save Edith; and I'll accomplish a few other things upon which I've set my heart."

It seemed to me that he expected Sylvia to understand far more of his meaning than she was really able to grasp. She looked up into his face anxiously, trying to read his eyes.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

Mrs. Seabury interrupted our discussion by sending word that she desired my attendance, and upon that I took hasty counsel with Jack as to what I should say if questioned about his story. It seemed best that I should know as little as possible, for that would give me the easiest part to play. Thus it was agreed, and if I may judge by my own discomfort and by the manner of my companions, there had been some slight awakening of our moral sense as the result of recent occurrences. The fabrication of falsehoods no longer passed with us as something merely habitual, an incident in the routine of life.

I found Mrs. Seabury in conference

with Cushing, whom I was surprised to see so soon returned from his errand; and I inferred that Clinton had declined to be advised. Such was the fact, as Mrs. Seabury immediately informed me.

"I want you to go to Doctor Clinton," said she, "and persuade him to take legal advice. You saw how badly he needed it a little while ago. The man will commit some serious indiscretion unless he accepts guidance; but he declines Mr. Cushing's services, although he could have them for nothing. Do you suppose you could make him see how stupidly he is behaving?"

"Do you mean to ask if I could persuade him to take Mr. Cushing for his lawyer?" said I; but Cushing flung up his hands impatiently.

"I'm done with the man," said he. "Let him go his own way. That's my advice to you, Mrs. Seabury."

"It seems too bad," said she. "We all know that he's done nothing wrong."

"Nevertheless," rejoined the lawyer dryly, "he's likely to get ten years for that matter of the bullet."

"I don't like him, but I am inclined to sympathize with him," said Mrs. Seabury. "Now, what lawyer could he get, here in Cape May; a good man, who wouldn't overcharge him?"

"Well," said Cushing, as if thinking it over, "there's old Clif Haynes. He's not altogether a fool."

"I know nothing about him," said she, "but if he's reliable——"

"Oh, yes, he's reliable; an honest old party as ever lived," said Cushing. "Send him to Haynes."

Mrs. Seabury turned to me with decision.

"Try to manage this, Arthur," she said. "You don't want to see Doctor Clinton get into serious trouble, do you? And, besides, it's of some importance to us. We can't have this fellow blundering about; he'll disarrange our plans."

"Couldn't you tell me a little more about what our plans are?" I asked. "It seems to me we've done absolutely



*"How much do you know about what I've been doing?"*

nothing in all these hours. We have not discovered a trace——"

"Who has done nothing?" Mrs. Seabury interposed, not sharply, but in a tone of gentle reproof. "How much do you know about what I've been doing?"

I confessed my ignorance.

"Well," said she, "did you expect anybody else to do anything?"

"Aunt, to be perfectly frank, I didn't know you were trying. From what you told me, and from what I've seen, I thought that you were solely occupied in throwing dust into the eyes of others."

"I haven't thrown any in my own," she replied. "You have watched me for some years, Arthur. You may have noticed that when the dust is flying it is more likely to blind somebody else than me."

Cushing had walked to a window, and was standing with his head outside, so that this last interchange between Aunt Frances and myself had

been in private. He now stepped out upon the veranda, giving us the room to ourselves.

"You suspect some one," said I. "Who is it?"

She studied my face in silence.

"I am disappointed, Arthur," she said at last. "You don't rely upon me as I would have hoped."

An angry and unwise retort was upon my lips. I would have asked her how she could expect me to rely upon her after such a scene as we had just passed through, in which she had striven to trick me as if I were a child. Even to my slow wits, which have no aptitude for stratagem, it was quite clear that Lawyer Haynes had been discussed before my coming, and that my errand was to betray Clinton into the hands of an attorney who would act

in Mrs. Seabury's interests. She knew that Jack could do the business better, but she dared not offer it to him because he was too clever; he would be sure to see the cat under the meal. I had been chosen for my dullness. However, it was worse than useless to speak of these causes of offense, and I checked myself in time.

"I think you don't quite understand my feeling, aunt," said I. "It seems to me that I stand absolutely alone in my desire to lay a hand upon the man who did this infamous thing. In spite of what you've just said to me, I can't believe that you see any farther into this mystery than I do; and, what is far worse, you show no eagerness, no resentment, no impulse of pursuit. It's the same with the others; and that's what I can't stand. It irritates and bewilders me."

"Well," said Mrs. Seabury, "what are you going to do about it?"

I rose, and paced the floor in foolish and futile excitement.



"Quinn seems to be a good man," said I. "He's earnest and, in his way, intelligent. If I weren't afraid——"

"For Sylvia," said she.

"Well, yes," I admitted. "Of course I know——"

"You know nothing," she interposed. "You haven't the faintest suspicion of the truth. I am going to tell you something, strictly in confidence. You must not breathe a word of it to anybody. Do you promise?"

"Aunt Frances, how can you ask me to make such a promise as that? I have no basis of information. I shouldn't know what I was promising."

She seemed hurt by my lack of confidence.

"If I ask you to do it, you should feel assured that it's entirely proper," said she. "I have nothing to gain by it; I might hold my tongue, if I pleased. But you are letting this matter prey upon your mind, and that's not safe, in your present state of health."

I tried to make conditions, but Mrs. Seabury would not listen to any modification of her own proposal. She knew that I would come to her terms, and I did, after vain fencing. Then, having bound me by a pledge most suitable to my conscience, she uttered the following grim enigma, weighing her words with great care:

"In the matter of Alice's death the difficulty is not in finding out the facts but in proving them. If you take any action toward disclosing the truth, you may do something which will result in a lifelong remorse, but you will certainly accomplish no good. If you knew the truth, you would be grieved, but you would feel no resentment against the person who fired the shot that killed that poor child. You would join with me in a policy of silence, if you were wise. Unfortunately I cannot trust in your discretion and self-control; therefore, I am constrained to keep you in the dark. You will get no light from Captain Quinn, nor from others in official position. Justice in this case cannot come through the law.

The only possible legal result would be the conviction of an innocent person. Remember, that is the end toward which you will be blindly working, if you attempt to solve this mystery."

"Tell me——" I began eagerly, but she checked me with a gesture.

"Not another word," said she.

"Does Sylvia know?"

"I haven't talked with her about it. You must not give her the slightest hint of what I have told you. I've always found you scrupulous about your word, Arthur. It will be very much to your interest to be so in the present matter."

And, having demolished the whole structure of ethics with that last sentence, she sent me to Clinton.

As for that business, I was willing enough to persuade Clinton to take legal advice, provided that he should have a lawyer of his own, and not a mere stalking-horse for Mrs. Seabury. I resolved, therefore, to keep him out of Haynes' hands if I could, and to trust in Providence for the honesty of the other one, whoever he might be.

With that, I dismissed the subject from my mind, and gave my undivided attention to Mrs. Seabury's veiled disclosure. It seemed susceptible of only one interpretation; the death of Alice must have resulted from some extraordinary accident. I recalled, so far as I was able, the exact words which Mrs. Seabury had used, repeating them many times and thoroughly committing them to memory. They were of the same general tenor as Sylvia's. "And yet not guiltily," Sylvia had said. Alice herself had written, "It was A——" Would the completed word have been "Accidental"? But that writing, and Jack's testimony, as well, seemed to prove that the shot had come from the veranda; and the unfortunate act was thus limited to three persons—Sylvia, Clinton, and the mysterious woman. Obviously, there was but one possible choice among them, for if either Clinton or the unknown woman had stood outside that window with a drawn weapon, the intent had not been innocent.

But in regard to Sylvia, a reasonable explanation was possible. Jack's revolver had vanished; some one must have taken it out of his bag. I was now disposed to believe that this was the weapon which had been used; that the bullet had been found and recognized, and that Clinton had substituted another. Sylvia had seen me put the revolver into the bag; most probably it was she who had removed it. What she had meant to do with it, I dared not decide; but I knew with what intent she would be charged by such a man as Quinn, investigating coldly with experience for his guide. He would say that Sylvia's bitter quarrel with Mrs. Seabury had suggested the act; that her determination had not been fully formed, but that she had yielded one step, at least, to the temptation of her enmity. Seeing a weapon, she had taken it, as ten thousand other people have done; and in the current of events a few have been whirled on to murder.

I must suppose that Sylvia was led to regret that she had taken the revolver, and to desire to replace it secretly. The chance came when Jack put his luggage on that table by the window in Mrs. Seabury's sitting room. Possibly Sylvia might have seen it there, looking across the room diagonally through one of the windows on the courtyard side. A flash of lightning might have shown it to her; she had seemed perhaps to see the right path thus illumined by a gleam out of the sky, a false light luring her to disaster. Be this as it may, she stood at last outside that seaward window, and looked in, beholding no one, for Alice was hidden by the high back of the chair in which she sat. Sylvia reached in, and drew the bag toward her along the table, and at the sound Alice sprang up.

It was the more startling to Sylvia because of her error in supposing this to be Mrs. Seabury who had surprised her in an act so questionable. She shrank back, closing her hands involuntarily, and the weapon was discharged. She saw the advancing shad-

owy figure checked with an awful suddenness; erect, rigid, and then reeling backward. And in that moment, when realization had not fully gripped her, when the flash and the sharp sound and the deadly consequence were elements of wonder merely, not of comprehension, the heavens opened above her head with a blinding flare and deafening concussion. Infinite forces seized upon her deed and mimicked it with thousandfold exaggeration, shouting it to the world. If she fled, it was rather from that voice out of the cloud, and from the conspiracy of nature, than from the just requital of her own share in the death of her enemy. An impulse old as the race would have spoken within her, answering the voice, and saying: "You made me do this. I would have withdrawn from evil and I was not permitted."

By the time that my imagination had finished this picture, I was drenched with cold sweat. I stopped upon the street, and uttered a sort of nightmare cry, a strangled groan, to the amazement of a passer-by. His look restored me to the realm of reality, and I pursued my way with better self-control. I perceived that there were two matters bearing strongly in Sylvia's favor. What had she done with the revolver? Certainly she had been in no fit state to think shrewdly when I had found her crouching by the wall. If she had hidden the weapon successfully, pure instinct must have guided her. I was sure of one thing; that I should not have known what to do with it. I could not go back to that spot, in perfect calmness, and find a place to hide a button off my coat. A bare floor and a bare wall; and, below, a courtyard full of men running from all sides to see the wreck of the flagstaff. This seeming impossibility filled me with satisfaction; it was a pillar of the defense.

But the second objection, though it carried even greater weight in my mind, could hardly be used for Sylvia's protection. It was her attitude toward the crime in the first moments after Alice's death. I was prepared to

swear, if any court would hear me, that Sylvia had suspected Mrs. Seabury. She had admitted it to me afterward, and her looks had declared it at the time. Yet it is an odd fact that women surpass men in acting everywhere, except upon the stage; and in the eye of the law Sylvia's suspicion would undoubtedly assume the appearance of a natural defensive stratagem.

Thus far had I advanced in my reasoning when I came to Clinton's house. He was not at home, but it was thought that he might soon return, and I sat on the porch to wait for him. If Mrs. Seabury had really tried to ease my mind by her Delphic utterance, she had failed; but if her wish had been to frighten me into inaction, she had succeeded to a degree that matched her reputation as the great conspirator. My feeling now was strictly in accord with the conduct of the others, which I had hitherto so strenuously opposed. Could it be that Mrs. Seabury had frightened them, in the same manner, or perhaps with a different tale for each of them, designed with skill to fit their natures which she knew so well? At any rate, we seemed to be entangled in a spider's web, and helpless under the will of the creature that had woven it.

I was aware of footsteps, and, looking out through the vines, I saw Mr. and Mrs. Stanton Lynde approaching along the flagged path. The architect of public opinion walked with bowed head, as usual, and he carried a sheaf of newspapers. I observed that Mrs. Lynde had changed her raiment, and was now more richly attired than before, not overdressed for these luxurious times, but only for my own simple taste. Between that lady and myself there was evidently a vital disagreement.

I stepped out from the porch, and Lynde looked up, probably mistaking me for Clinton; but the error was anticipated by his wife, who spoke my name in his ear. It was easy to perceive that his defect of vision irritated her—a thing not unusual in families. Doubtless it seemed to her an obstacle to their advancement in the world.

"Ah, Mr. Seabury," said he. "Of course you've seen the papers? For my part, I've been so busy all day long that I've not had the time to read them, except my own report. You've seen that, I suppose," he added, offering me a sober sheet that bore no illustrations; but my gaze was riveted upon another that hung open from his hand.

Its first page was a portrait gallery of our family—Mrs. Seabury, and the three incapables, and Alice at the age of seventeen, the only likeness that the paper had been able to secure. There was also a photograph of a corner of the Eglington's south wing, with a white arrow pointing to a certain window. And these pictures chained my attention, although they conveyed no message; they were merely the same old portraits which, with the exception of Alice's, I had seen in public prints before; and yet they appealed to me far more than type, and it was the paper with that great display of illustration that I was most eager to see. My own countenance as an adjunct of that dreadful story seemed like something new, and I beheld it with a thrill, as if an interior voice had whispered: "Can this be the man?"

These were morning editions, and the writers had not had much time to gather news. The story which accompanied the most numerous pictures was cut up into small pieces and seemed quite incomprehensible as a whole; partly, perhaps, because I tried to read it in such frantic haste.

"I beg your pardon," said I. "This is the first paper I have seen. Mr. Deering had some, this morning, but they were in his room, and I didn't look at them. Mrs. Seabury got them all, I suppose—" At that moment my eye fell upon a sub-heading in the report which I had been laboring to understand, and I turned cold.

There was an incomplete but not altogether inaccurate account of the speculative operations in which Jack and I had been engaged. Our stocks were named, and the writer seemed to know at what figures we had bought and how much money we had lost. His

chief error lay in supposing that the speculation and the loss were mostly mine; Jack was represented as having had but a small share in the venture. For this misstatement there was fair excuse in the way our orders had been placed, but the result of it was appalling; for, though the allegations were very carefully hedged about with doubtful phrases, the intimation was successfully conveyed. I had been ruined on the market; I owed money which I could not pay; and Mrs. Seabury had shewn no disposition to come to my assistance.

Directly following this fragment of the story was a headline, "Chief Quinn's Theory. He Believes that the Assassin Shot Miss Warden Mistaking Her for Mrs. Seabury." I had already seen the same view stated in the larger lines at the beginning of the account, but as it was not news to me I had not been impressed. It had a very different aspect when deliberately placed in juxtaposition with the narrative of my pecuniary difficulties. It amounted to an accusation.

"You seem disturbed," said Lynde, coming close to me, that he might see my face more clearly. "You must be prepared for the vagaries of the sensational press."

"Have they all got this story about me?" I asked.

"No," he replied. "That's the only one. It is what we call professionally a beat—that is, if there's any truth in it."

My mind was so much occupied that I made no response. I stepped into the porch and touched the button at the door; and when the servant came I asked permission to use Doctor Clinton's telephone. The Lyndes, learning that Doctor Clinton was from home, sat down outside to wait for him.

I called the Eglinton, and asked for Jack. He was not in his room, but was supposed to be about the hotel. A long delay ensued, and, because I was too nervous to sit idle, I read Lynde's report. The paper lay on Clinton's desk.

It was a dull narrative, without color

or proportion, the facts catalogued rather than told. The writer seemed to be trying to tell of a murder as if it were something else, not wrong, not shocking; and the description of Edith Lockwood's pitiful romance, with the attempt to implicate her in the crime, was a miracle of cold brutality. A broad-soled commercialism distinguished this piece of writing; it trod heavily like a solid man upon the living human decencies, and seemed not to know that they were under its feet. But the reading helped me; it took me out of myself for the moment, and made me think of Edith with a warmer sympathy, as one to whose defense I was committed.

At last Jack's voice came to me over the wire. I asked him whether he had seen that paper with the account of our speculation. "No," said he, but the word did not ring true.

"I think you have, Jack, if you'll forgive me," said I. "You had that paper this forenoon, didn't you?"

"Oh, that's all right," said he, with a sudden buoyancy. "I forgot to tell you about that matter. They carried us—our brokers carried us, I don't quite know why—and the market's turned to-day. We're safe, old man. I've talked with Philadelphia over the phone."

"Why didn't you tell me about that story, Jack?"

"What was the use? It would only worry you. It doesn't amount to anything."

"Did Sylvia read it?"

"I don't know," he answered, with just an instant's hesitation. "Why?"

"She didn't speak of it to me," said I. "It seems strange."

"Oh, nonsense!" he rejoined. "We haven't had time to talk of things like that."

"She was afraid to mention it to me," said I, "and so were you. I would like to know why."

"No, no; nothing of the kind," he cried. "You're entirely mistaken. Where are you? Come up here; I want to talk to you. Never mind what you're doing. Drop it. I'll attend to

it myself, later. Come to my room, Arthur, right away. Will you?"

"In half an hour," said I. "Don't say anything to Sylvia in the meantime. Good-by."

For a little while I sat there thinking. I did not quite say to myself, "Was it I?" but rather, "Is the thing possible? Has it ever happened—could it ever happen—to anybody?" Conviction had not yet entered into my mind. Waves of faintness came, and were gone; moments of despair when my heart stopped, and it seemed impossible that I should live; but these effects were brief, and as yet my mind refused to receive the hideous suggestion except as something which was believed by others.

Now and then I would be puzzled to understand how I had thought of it, and again, why I had not suspected it immediately. The idea seemed to have sprung out at me, while I was wondering why I had not seen the papers, and with the recollection that Jack had kept them away from me. But the manner of it was unimportant, now that my eyes were opened. Beyond question everything that Sylvia and Jack had said and done, and a great part of Mrs. Seabury's conduct, with that strange statement of the case which she had made to me, could be explained upon the theory that they knew Alice's death to have been my act, done without sense or memory.

"One of us," Sylvia had said, "and yet not guiltily." And she had pledged me, as it were, against despair, by joining me with herself in a sworn loyalty. We would bear it together, we two, she had said; and yet both she and Jack had certainly cherished the hope that I should never know. Drugged by an unnatural sleep, I had walked into the pitfall of this awful deed. And Sylvia had pitied me, and Jack had stood my friend, and poor Aunt Frances, whose heart was changing to a lump of yellow dross within her breast, had taken time from her designs to blind my eyes in mercy.

But could the thing be true? It seemed fantastic; and at that thought

despair swept over me with a heavy surge. For the more improbable it was, the more direct and sure the evidence must be which had convinced my friends. An instance came to me; not very long ago a man had shot and killed his wife in their room at night. The fact was undisputed, and the man came to trial, with no other defense



*I stopped upon the street, and uttered a sort of nightmare cry.*

than his apparent lack of motive and his unsupported word that he had been asleep. He was acquitted. I had read the story in the papers with a perfect disbelief. The man was a murderer, in my opinion; he had known what he was doing.

And yet, if any one should ask me what I had done in my own interval of unconsciousness before the thunder waked me, what could I say? Merely that I knew nothing whatever about it. A confused dream of irrational resent-



ment against Mrs. Seabury was all that remained in my memory, but even that had seemed to fade as I sank into slumber. What followed was an utter void; and yet I had walked, I had in some degree possessed my senses, seeing the window, stepping across the sill. Beyond question I had been physically capable of firing the shot.

"And yet not guiltily." I remembered my wild fancy that Sylvia had meant herself. She had meant me; and that belief acquitted her of all responsibility, proved to me that she was free from guilt, free from the torment of regret for any personal share in yesterday's cruel tragedy. This thought should give me comfort; I should take up the burden with something brighter than mere fortitude, thanking God that it was mine and not Sylvia's.

With that I arose and walked out of the room, not very steadily, but with a sense of regulating my demeanor, as if I were observed. There seemed to be silent people seated in the chairs, watching me.

Mr. and Mrs. Lynde were still on the porch, and in their company I experienced the singular sensation of being calm while they were excited, Lynde in his grave, guarded way, and the lady with a kind of hungry eagerness. It occurred to me to wonder how they had dared to call upon Clinton, after the publication of that story of his private affairs. Perhaps Clinton was not supposed to know Lynde's share in it; perhaps Lynde had meanly brought his wife with him as a check upon the doctor's natural resentment. However that might be, I could not doubt that both of them were very deeply sensible of the importance of the matter in which they were engaged; and it seemed to me that the driving machinery of their design was with the wife, and the discretion with the husband.

Mrs. Lynde opened a conversation with me immediately, at least half her mind and nearly all of my own being occupied with other matters. Her talk was a mere string of names and sums of money and extravagant possessions. She had once seen me at somebody's

house—an afternoon crush of brief duration—and I had not been presented to her. Had I ever been aboard that person's yacht? A magnificent vessel, princely; the furnishings, pictures, statuary, were said to have cost—I forget the sum she named. Country houses, automobiles, some new monstrosity for the feeding of gluttons at one of the Philadelphia hotels—such were her themes, and I began to view Lynde with tolerance, my animosity dissolving in sympathy. Presently, when the chance came, I asked a question which led the man to say: "My tastes are simple, even pastoral. I am afraid that I might be a deserter from the battle, if there were no one to support my courage." And he turned an affectionate and admiring glance upon the inspirer of his life.

It flashed across my mind that this pair would hardly be content to serve Mrs. Seabury for wages only, in the present exigency. They would look for something better. An unendurable loathing seized upon me when I thought of Mrs. Seabury's paying tribute for the suppression of my secret. But even if I should not prevent it, would she pay? The little man upon the bench before me was not destitute of shrewdness; he was steady, he was cautious, and, if he lacked hardihood, his love would make him act as if he had it. There were brains behind his forehead; patient, concentrated thinking had worn furrows in his fat face; he was not an adversary to be despised. Yet I seemed to see him crushed like a worm under Mrs. Seabury's foot.

## CHAPTER XV.

I decided not to wait longer, and so took my leave of the Lyndes. I had gone only a little way when I saw Clinton coming toward me. At the first glance he seemed improved in spirits; he walked less rigidly, indeed with that excess of movement which denotes relief from a protracted strain; and I remarked upon his cheerier bearing when we met.

"To tell you the truth, Seabury," he



said, "I've taken legal advice. I should have done it before."

"Whom have you seen?" I asked, and he named Clifford Haynes.

If there were mischief in this, it was now done, and I had not the tact to deal with the situation as it stood. I merely warned him vaguely not to trust any man too far, and then hastened to another theme, asking him about Edith. His reply was constrained and indefinite beyond any reasonable explanation that I could imagine; and when he had passed on and was out of sight, I turned toward Edith's house. Clinton's manner had revived in my mind the idea that Edith's illness might be chiefly mental—a prostration resulting from the strain of yesterday's events. It seemed to me that I should be able to relieve her anxiety, if she were not too ill to hear me. I was not prepared to tell her all that I believed, but at least I could reassure her, if she felt any alarm for her own safety.

Mrs. Lockwood met me at the door, a slender, careworn woman, whose strength was all spiritual. Her body would have ceased to serve her long ago but for the resolution of its tenant. She lived for her children, and one of them was in especial need of her devotion at that moment; wherefore she was prepared to triumph over everything, even her own conscience, as I presently discovered.

"Edith seems a little better," she said. "She'll do very well, I've no doubt, with perfect quiet. Of course, she can't see anybody. Coroner Ritter was here, but he didn't insist. And Captain Quinn has been here twice since——"

"Mother!" a voice called from within and above. "Ask Mr. Seabury to come in. Please tell him to come up to the library."

Mrs. Lockwood leaned weakly against the wall.

"Oh, my dear!" she said, in a faint voice. "I'm afraid you ought not."

"Now don't be alarmed, mother," said the voice. "I'd rather trust Arthur than any of the others. Arthur, will you please come up?"

I stepped into the hall, and saw Edith looking down from the banister rail. So far as I could judge, her attire and appearance were quite ordinary, and wholly inconsistent with the story of her sudden and violent illness. I ascended the stairs, wondering.

There was a bright little room opening from the upper hall, with a study table in the middle and bookshelves on two sides. This they called the library, and it was there that Edith received me, taking both my hands.

"Oh, how dreadful," she said. "Alice, Alice! Who could have done this terrible thing? I have cried nearly all night."

Doubtless she thought so, and I had no doubt that she had shed many tears before she slept.

"It is a mystery," I said. "Aunt Frances thinks that the truth will never be known."

"That's what Jack said last evening." With the words, her mind seemed to veer suddenly. "Oh, Arthur, can Jack have told my story? It doesn't seem possible; it's not like him. But I have told no one else, and it's all in this paper. Look at it."

She pointed to the table, where Stanton Lynde's account lay uppermost of many.

"Edith," said I, "there is something in this that passes my comprehension. Did you see Jack last evening?"

"Yes; he came here. I told him everything. I never should have thought of denying that I was at the Eglinton, if Jack hadn't said that it was necessary. He said I must deny it up and down, and stick to it. I wasn't to admit it to anybody—not to you or Sylvia, or any one at all, except my mother, who knew already. And then he told it himself!"

"How do you know, Edith? What makes you think so?"

"Why, who else could have done it?" she exclaimed. "I'm sure no one else saw me except Dalton, and I don't believe he recognized me. I ran away from him. You didn't see me, I'm sure."

"I? Where? When?"

"On the balcony—the upper veranda."

"Were you there?"

"I didn't go 'way up; just to the head of the stairs; and when I saw you coming toward me, I dodged back, for I didn't want any one to know that I was there. And this paper even tells why I went, and certainly nobody but Jack knew that."

Now indeed the real horror took hold upon me, and the marrow of my bones froze. I had a difficulty in speaking; my teeth seemed to be locked.

"You saw me," said I, "coming toward you?"

"Yes; and I don't understand what the papers mean by trying to make it appear that the shot was fired through that window. You must have been looking right at it. Haven't you told anybody? Oh, Arthur," she cried suddenly, sinking her voice, "are you afraid? Is it—is it dangerous to admit that you were so near? Why, Arthur! What's the matter? You're shivering; you look so strange! Oh, I'm frightened."

"It's only the excitement," said I. "And I've not been very well. That's all. It will pass away. Don't be alarmed, Edith. The shadow is over us a bit; but we must all have courage."

"Jack said I mustn't tell you. Oh, I wish I hadn't. But I was angry with him."

"You mustn't be," said I. "Jack didn't tell your story. He would have been the last man in the world to do that. It was a reporter who found it out. I know the man."

"It makes me utterly ridiculous!" she cried. "A silly, jealous girl, and that's just what I am. I may as well admit it, since the whole world knows. I went to the hotel to find out whether Stuart Clinton would run over there to see Sylvia the moment she arrived. I just wanted to know, that's all. And I came very near bumping right into him. That's why I went out upon the lower veranda, and no sooner was I there—feeling like a goose, as you may well imagine—than Dalton came stalking across the court, and I had to go some-

where else. I went up the stairs, and whom should I see but you, strolling along the veranda from your window, muttering to yourself like a crazy man, your hands thrust down into your pockets, this way." She imitated my attitude. "Jack said that you had had some words with him about the rooms."

"My hands were in my pockets?" said I, for my last hope hung upon it. If she had seen me empty-handed, it would have helped me with a doubt.

"Why, yes," said she. "What of it? It's a habit of yours. But Jack seemed to think it strange. He kept asking me about it. He said he hadn't talked with you."

"No," I replied. "We hadn't had much chance to speak alone; and as you yourself suggested a moment ago, it might not be quite prudent for me to talk too freely. You see, it's really very remarkable that I should have been so near, and yet not have seen anything that could help the police. They might be justified in suspecting that I was not dealing openly with them."

"I won't breathe a word," she said. "It's all so mysterious, so dreadful. Can it be possible that she did it herself? She seemed to be very sad at times. And Jack told me she was in such good spirits, yesterday. They always are, you know."

"The shot was fired from a distance," said I. "There are no marks."

"But I've read in books that if a pistol is fired through something—Still, she wouldn't have done that. And besides, the pistol wasn't found. You don't think Jack could have hidden it, do you? At the first moment, he might not have thought that she would die, and he would have tried to cover up the truth for her sake. And you know that Jack is very clever in that way; he can make an object vanish right before your eyes, and you not have a notion where it's gone."

"No, no, Edith; these are mere dreams," said I. "Doctor Clinton must have told you—"

"I haven't seen Doctor Clinton," said she. "He's been here several times,

and mother thought I ought to talk with him, but I wouldn't. I never will again. He talked with mother, and he guessed that I was at the Eglinton, but she told him nothing. In fact, mother doesn't know that I went up the stairs. I didn't happen to mention it at first, and now, of course, I wouldn't tell her for the world; she'd worry so. Jack advised me not to; and he made mother promise not to say a word to any one—and you know my mother."

"Did Jack suggest that you should pretend to be ill?" I asked. It seemed too unwise a plan to have come from him.

"No; that was Doctor Clinton, and I think it was extremely foolish. He himself regrets it now, so mother tells me, and I'm to be much better to-morrow. But my martyred mother has managed to convince everybody, even Captain Quinn. She fibbed to him in a way that would have made Jack Deering seem a very unimaginative person. Poor mother! I think it would have been much better to have told the truth in the beginning; unless it would have hurt you, Arthur. Would it?"

"I hardly know what to say, Edith. So far as I am concerned—myself, alone—I would be quite willing to have the whole truth told. But there are others to be considered. I am afraid you must go on as you have begun, until you can have better advice than mine. I say this chiefly because of Doctor Clinton. He has taken some risk in the course that he has pursued, and you might easily do him great injury by an unwise act. You don't wish to do that."

"Why should I be considerate of him?" said she.

"Because you love him, Edith," I replied, "and he loves you. I don't understand the motives and the fears which have swayed him since that dreadful hour yesterday, but I know that all his anxiety has been for you. In such hours as these a man finds out the truth about his own heart. I'm going to tell you frankly that I don't believe the quarrel which divided you from him was all his fault. Of course,

I know nothing about the circumstances, but I do know you. You're impulsive, Edith, and not always just. I think——"

"Well, you're quite right," said she. "It was partly my fault, but I wouldn't admit it to him."

"You'll never have to do it," I responded. "He has taken it all upon himself. If there is a conscience-stricken and repentant man between the two oceans, it is Stuart Clinton. I advise you to see him, Edith; and I guess that's all that will be necessary. You should both be happy. Some of us won't be, I'm afraid. The memory of yesterday will sadden us for a long time, perhaps as long as we live. And that should put an added value on the happiness of our friends."

A kind of brightness came into her face, mingled with a very youthful, pretty embarrassment.

"I don't see how you can do this, Arthur," she said. "I don't see how you can speak so well of him. You ought to hate him. I have hated Sylvia; I have lain awake at night to hate her."

"Don't tell that to anybody else," said I, "and don't do it any more. She has never harmed you. Remember, we knew nothing of your broken engagement, Edith. You and Clinton continued to meet as friends."

"I insisted upon it," said she. "I wanted to show him how little I cared." At this, a tear rolled slowly down her cheek. She dashed it away with her hand. "You seem so sad, Arthur. Of course, you feel dreadfully. And that makes it very good of you to talk to me as you have, and try to help me."

"It's all that I could find to do," said I. "I turned from the irreparable toward something which seemed to me as if it might be mended. And now, let me caution you just once more before I go. Receive Clinton when he comes again, but until then be silent. Tell him the whole truth, and rely on his advice."

"I won't do anything that will hurt you," said she. "But don't you think it must all come out soon? I was quite sure last evening that Jack knew the

truth; and of course, if he does know and is concealing it, there's only one thing that we can possibly believe. If Alice didn't do it herself, it must have been done by some one whom we don't care about, some business enemy of Mrs. Seabury's, as Captain Quinn believes. Jack wouldn't shield such a person. And I'm sure he knows—knows positively. So it must have been Alice. Can she have loved him, and have learned that he loved some one else?"

"She couldn't have learned that, because he didn't," said I. "He cared as much for her as for any girl, and she knew it. Besides, the wound was not one that would have been self-inflicted; and there are many other matters."

I paused, for the whole room was swimming out of my sight, and I must cling to my chair in order not to fall; but, as often happens, the sensation was disproportionate to the visible effect. Edith saw nothing in my demeanor beyond a natural display of feeling, and presently I took my leave of her steadily enough. I went out to the familiar street as to the citadel of an enemy.

Between the highest crimson cloud in the sky and the gray desert stretching to the eastward, all visible things frowned upon me, all sounds accused and threatened me.

I walked aimlessly, not daring to return immediately to the Eglinton. My mind was active, and seemed clear. The essential fact in Edith's story was of a perfectly simple nature, and she herself had been prevented from seeing its true import only by a kind of accident. Some word or look of Jack's had suggested to her mind the utterly fanciful explanation of suicide, and she had clung to it thereafter with a childish persistence, her own unfortunate romance contributing to make it plausible. But the time must soon come when she would have to abandon this belief. She could hardly hold to it after her first meeting with Clinton. Surely she must perceive, and he, also, that I stood absolutely alone upon the scene of that fatal act. It was idle to suppose that any person would have committed that crime before my face. My mere presence condemned me.

TO BE CONTINUED.



### Castles

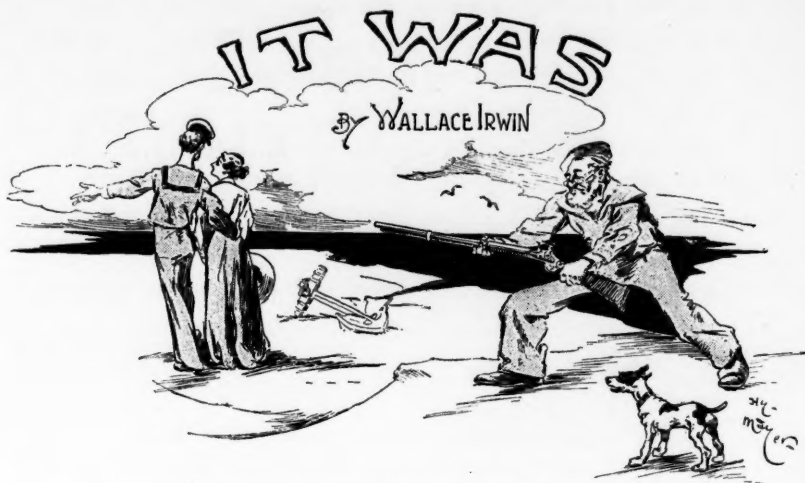
WHAT castles you've built of glitter and gilt  
And many a radiant hue!  
With Hope as a prop you builded them up  
Expecting your dreams to come true.

But your minarets fair only changed into air  
Like the mist of a rainbow band,  
Your hopes wouldn't stay and your dreams fell away  
'Neath the touch of Reality's wand.

Oh, what was the use and what the excuse  
For spinning such gossamer stuff,  
If Fate with a wink can cause them to shrink  
Or whirl them away with a puff?

Ah, never a man since the ages began  
Was better than dreams of his youth,  
And the higher we build and the brighter we gild,  
The nearer we come to the truth!

WILLIAM F. McCORMACK.



ILLUSTRATED BY H.V. MAYER

IT was the Ancient Mariner whom everybody knew,  
 It was his lovely daughter whose eyes were soft and true,  
 It was the Youthful Mariner as into port he blew.

It was the Youthful Mariner who seemed to fascinate,  
 It was the lovely daughter who lingered by the gate,  
 It was the Ancient Mariner who growled: "It's gittin' late!"

It was a Sunday morning when skies are bright and clear,  
 It was a sailor and a maid who strolled by Belvedere—  
 It was the Ancient Mariner who followed in the rear.

It was the maiden's lily hand the youthful sailor clasped,  
 It was an antique gatling-gun the gloomy father grasped,  
 It was a flint-lock fowling-piece which somewhat creaked and rasped.

It was the Youthful Mariner whose voice was soft as soap:  
 "It is me ship which yonder lies—fair maiden, let's elope!"  
 It was the Ancient Mariner came bouncing up the slope.

It was an anxious moment for that youthful buccaneer,  
 It was the ancient fowling-piece that pointed at his ear,  
 It was the Ancient One who spoke: "Young man, git out of here!"

It was the schooner *Howling Swell* that faded like a speck,  
 It was the youngest of the crew that bowed his manly neck,  
 It was the Youthful Mariner a-swabbing down the deck.

It was the lovely daughter who by the cottage fared,  
 It was the Ancient Mariner who chewed his quid and glared,  
 It was the dainty maiden spoke: "Gee, pa, but he was scared!"

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It was full twelve or fourteen years the maid her bonnet set;  
 It was full twenty Youthful Tars that came the maid to get—  
 It was the same old gatling-gun. The maid's not married yet.





# THE COWBOY CUNTESS

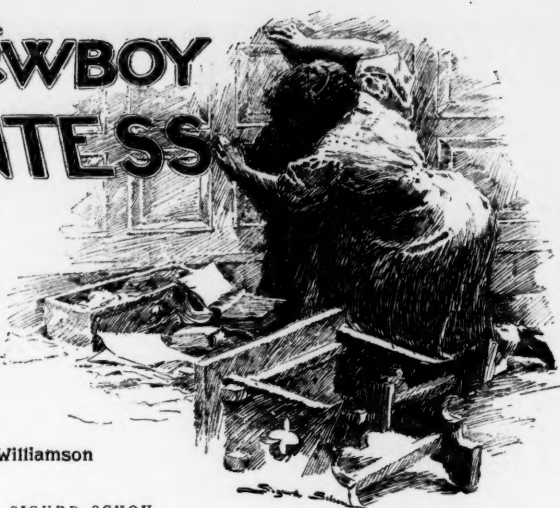
Her Adventures  
While Maid of  
Honor to the Queen

TOLD IN LETTERS TO  
HER LATE GOVERNESS

VI.

Edited by G. N. and A. M. Williamson

ILLUSTRATED BY SIGURD SCHOU



CASTLE KILGARD.  
*Wednesday.*

DEAREST MADEMOISELLE.

What a good, kind letter you have written, wishing me and "my Teddy" happiness, and a "triumph over all obstacles, mysterious and otherwise." I thank you a hundred times; and you'll be glad to know that your loving words came just at the moment when I was needing hope and courage.

I was right, dear. There was an obstacle—there is an obstacle. When at first I began to feel its presence, like a ghost in the dark, I thought light-heartedly that Teddy and I should be able to overcome it together. Yet now I find, if it can be overcome, I shall have to work alone, without Teddy. Not that he doesn't love me. He says it is because he loves me so much that

— But this isn't the way to begin, if I'm ever to make you understand the strange things that are happening.

I do hate to frighten you, but I am rather frightened myself; and you like me to tell you about all the big, important things in my life. As dad would have said, I'm "up against the biggest, hardest proposition" I ever struck.

I'm sure you'll remember the post-script in my last letter, for in that I spoke of the mysterious obstacle which had separated Lord Kilgard—Teddy's elder and only brother—from Princess Vida of Baden-Schwarzwald, and which might possibly separate Teddy from me. My first hint of this mystery came from the Grand Duchess of Mosel, just after hearing that it was impossible for any male member of Teddy's family to be "officially" engaged until after his twenty-eighth birthday. He knew this fact; that such an unwritten law had been obeyed by the men of his house for several generations, but he had hoped that the king and queen would, in the circumstances, countenance a tacit engagement, to be announced publicly the day after the birthday, due in a few weeks.

The royal decision, however, was that we must wait; we must not even consider ourselves engaged until after the birthday, and each must hold the other free till then.

This arrangement did not worry me much until after a talk I had with the Grand Duchess of Mosel, who is a distant cousin of his majesty's, and is often

in England. She was visiting the queen when I came back to Sandringham, after that memorable trip to London and the short illness that followed. As she is an aunt by marriage of Princess Vida of Baden-Schwarzwald, naturally she was interested in the love affairs of Lord Kilgard's younger brother, and she seemed to take a fancy to me. I liked her, too, for though she is middle-aged and not pretty, there is a dreamy, spirituelle sort of charm about her, and her many almost childlike superstitions amused me, as they do all her friends.

"I consider myself a good judge of character," she said to me, when she had called me into her sitting room for a talk, "and I think, my dear, that you are as brave as you are pretty. Therefore I prophesy that your love story will have a better ending than poor Princess Vida's. Perhaps if she had had your courage she might have been happy in spite of the mystery."

Before I stopped to think, I had blurted out: "What mystery?" and the duchess' dreamy eyes lighted with astonishment.

"You didn't know there was a mystery at Castle Kilgard?" she exclaimed.

Then I was ashamed that she should divine my ignorance of almost everything concerning Teddy's family; but it was too late. I had to confess that I knew nothing.

"I'm sorry I should have been the one to give you a first hint of it, then," said she in her gentle way. "I thought Captain O'Malley would have told you something—or that the dear queen would perhaps have explained why no O'Malley must ever engage himself to marry until after his twenty-eighth birthday."

"Is that a part of the mystery?" I inquired.

"Well, it is supposed to be connected with it, though no outsider knows in what way," the duchess admitted. By this time she had raised my curiosity to such a pitch that I begged her to go on. I must know more now, and she could see, I urged, why it would be im-

possible for me to question my dear royal mistress, or even Teddy.

"Very likely they don't know more than anybody else—at least anybody who knows about the mystery at all," said the duchess. She added that she could understand Captain O'Malley's reluctance to bring up such a subject with me—a subject on which his family must be extremely sensitive; but at the same time she thought I ought to know as much at least as other people knew, since the matter concerned me so nearly.

"It's only this," said she at last. "There's supposed to be some strange curse overhanging the O'Malley's, a secret which is told to each young man of the family when he is of a suitable age to endure hearing it. When he knows the truth, he can decide whether he will marry or not."

"But that sounds like the most foolish, old-fashioned superstition," I exclaimed. "It's the sort of thing you find in silly, melodramatic stories. 'A family curse! a dreadful ban!' Surely there can be nothing in it."

"I don't know," replied the duchess doubtfully. "The strangest rumors go about whenever anything happens to draw attention to the family legend of the O'Malleys, as at the death of Lord Kilgard's bride, and then, seven or eight years later, the breaking off of his love affair with my little niece."

I hadn't known that Lord Kilgard was a widower, and begged the duchess to tell me how his wife had died.

"Well, I don't see that there can be any harm in your knowing that," said she, half guiltily. "Lord Kilgard disobeyed the family law, which forbids marriage before the twenty-eighth birthday of any of the O'Malley men. He was in love with a pretty young actress, quite a respectable girl, of good birth; and his father, who was alive then, wouldn't even hear of an engagement. The boy—he was only twenty-three—quarreled with his father, and ran off with the girl, whom he was afraid of losing if he didn't secure her at once, as she was very popular, and dozens of rich young men



*"You didn't know there was a mystery at Castle Kilgard?" she exclaimed.*

wanted to marry her. Old Lord Kilgard was so shocked when he received a telegram from Scotland, with the news of his son's marriage, that he had a stroke of paralysis. Perhaps, if he could have spoken, he would have forbidden the young couple to come home to Castle Kilgard, where he was stricken down; but he was speechless, and there was nobody else to protest. Young

Teddy was a 'sub.' at the time, just out of Sandhurst, seeing his first service in South Africa, in the last days of the Boer war. So the bride and groom came to Castle Kilgard, and were there several weeks, waiting for old Lord Kilgard to die—little dreaming that the girl was destined to die first. But that is what happened.

"One evening her husband had been

watching beside his father, in whom there was some slight change; and when he went to look for his wife she wasn't to be found. All night they searched, and at last discovered her, at least so people say—from servants' tales, perhaps—in a part of the castle shut off from the rest of the house, lying at the foot of a stone stairway, quite dead."

"Murdered?" I half whispered.

"There was no sign of violence. And afterward the doctors attributed the poor girl's death to heart failure. But there was a look of horror on her dead face, as if she had seen some dreadful sight in her last moments."

"They never found out anything more?"

"Never. She was dead. That was all. The next day old Lord Kilgard died; and poor Gerald, who had been so merry and witty, and full of the joy of life, was a changed man. In twelve hours he had aged ten years. He is only thirty-one or two now, yet his hair is gray. To be sure, with his dark eyes, and jet-black brows and lashes, the contrast makes him but the handsomer and more interesting; and Princess Vida fell in love with him at first sight because of it, she told me; still, it is a proof that he has suffered."

"I suppose he adored the poor girl who died?" I said.

"A boy's love. The great change in him came from something more than the loss of her—there can be no doubt of that."

"You think it had to do with the 'curse,' as you call it?"

"Yes. The secret—whatever it may be."

"And the Princess Vida—does she know the secret?"

"Ah, no! The O'Malleys do not tell the secret to any one in the world, not even to the women they love. But—though I am not deep in Vida's confidence, or her father's—I suspect that Lord Kilgard, in confessing his love, confessed something else, too; something which frightened her so much that she dared not risk a future by his side. I told you that Vida is not a

brave girl like you. She is a charming but fragile child, and even her love could not give her enough courage to take Kilgard for her husband, otherwise they would have married a year ago, for her father desired the marriage, and even pressed it on for a while. He is poor, and Lord Kilgard is very, very rich, as well as of birth high enough to mate with a girl of royal blood."

"You can't be sure, if she has never confided in you, that her parting with Lord Kilgard had any connection with the secret," I argued.

"I can't be sure," the duchess admitted, "but I and all the world put it down to that. Probably the mystery will always remain a mystery, and it may be a mere bugbear. For your sake, I pray it is no more. But it has broken the happiness of several lives, many, perhaps. That I do know. I can only hope, with all my heart, dear girl, that it may not darken yours. Be brave—be always as brave as you seem now, and maybe you will be able to throw light into the place of shadows."

That conversation, which I've now repeated to you, dearest mademoiselle, almost word for word—since I could never forget one sentence of it—took place just before I wrote you last. Although I am not superstitious or silly in such ways—thanks to you and dad for bringing me up sensibly—I couldn't help being impressed, even anxious. But I scolded myself; I would not think about the mystery; and though it was difficult at first not to dwell on it constantly, in my mind, as the days went on it became easier. Teddy, who wrote often, said nothing in his letters about an obstacle, or a secret which might separate us, and I began to believe that there were only matter-of-fact reasons for their majesties' objections to a tacit engagement before the twenty-eighth birthday. Teddy seemed cheerful, and wrote always about the "joy of claiming" me, as soon as he had reached the "mature age of twenty-eight." Then, only a week ago, came the birthday, and he got leave, so that he might run over to Ireland and spend

it at Castle Kilgard, according to long-established custom in the O'Malley family. His brother was to welcome him there, for Lord Kilgard lives always at Kilgard now, and hasn't once been to London since the sad ending of his short love episode with Princess Vida of Baden-Schwarzwald last year.

I felt a little excited, thinking about the birthday, but by this time I had made myself believe that all the talk about a mystery was mere gossip. A great deal was going on at Sandringham, and luckily I hadn't much leisure to spend in worrying. The Duke and Duchess of Connaught had arrived on a visit, to say good-by to the king and queen before going to Ireland, and altogether the time passed quickly until three days after Teddy's twenty-eighth birthday. On the third morning I received a letter; and can you imagine how I felt, dearest, when I read that Teddy no longer wanted to marry me?

I could hardly believe my eyes—for he had loved me so much; and his letter was almost cold. Its coldness hurt me even more than the news it had to tell, for I thought I could have borne anything if only I could have been sure that he loved me as dearly as ever, through it all. At least, that is the way I felt, until suddenly it was just as if a voice spoke in my ear, and said: "He thinks to make it easier for you to forget him, if he can persuade you that he isn't worth caring for."

The letter said:

This twenty-eighth birthday is rather a solemn date for us O'Malleys, and on reflection, for which I have had plenty of time here, I feel that I can never make you as happy as you deserve to be. It is my duty to say, "forget all about me," and I do say it. I am thankful that I was prevented from tying you down to an engagement which could only have made you miserable. Now nobody knows, or ever need know, that for a few days you once fancied you cared a little for me.

That is a quotation from the letter which I have with me here, and could easily refer to if I didn't know every line in it only too well. Do you wonder my heart was ready to break until that new idea sprang into my head?

I snatched at the hope, at the assurance that I had found the key to the mystery of his coldness, even though there were another mystery beyond, harder to unlock without his help. Courage came back to me, the courage which the Grand Duchess of Mosel had said I would need if I were to keep my happiness. I tried to think what to do, and I felt that the only thing was to see Teddy as soon as possible.

He would not want to see me, I was pretty sure, because if he really loved me with all his heart, it would be almost more than he could do to give me up if I threw myself into his arms and told him my whole life's happiness was at stake. If there were a family mystery which he had just discovered, and thought important enough to keep us apart, he would already have told me, unless he had decided that I mustn't be allowed to find it out. Therefore, if I tried to find out, I would get no help from him. On the contrary, he would hinder me as much as he could; and rather than meet me again soon, he would very likely ask for longer leave.

At present, he had only ten days more, just enough to last him through a short visit which the Duke and Duchess of Connaught were to pay at Castle Kilgard at the beginning of their tour in Ireland; but I "felt in my bones" that he would try for an extension, for the sake of avoiding me when the court should move to London.

Suddenly, as I thought and thought, in desperation, a second inspiring idea came to me. I would tell the queen everything, and if I could induce her to sympathize, I would beg her to arrange things somehow for me to go to Ireland in the train of the Duchess of Connaught. In that way I could arrive at Castle Kilgard as a surprise to Teddy, and yet it would be quite conventional, no one being able to guess from the visit that there was anything between us.

Well, you know already, not only from me, but from all the world, that the queen is an angel. She let me tell her all, and she even read the letter



from Teddy, which I gave her. She agreed with me in thinking that he was only trying to hide his love, so that I might not feel the loss of him as keenly as if he showed his whole heart. She believed me when I assured her that I could never be happy again, or care for any other man, if I had to give him up. And in the end, she consented to do what she could to secure me this one chance to snatch happiness out of the fire, instead of standing on one side to see it burn up.

When she said she would "do what she could," I knew the thing was as good as done—and so it was.

Luckily my "wait" was over, and Lady Maude's coming on. I could well be spared, and the Duchess of Connaught most kindly agreed to make a place for me in her entourage for the Irish visit. No sooner was the plan arranged than it was carried out, for the duke and duchess were on the point of leaving England.

Dearest, can you picture Teddy's face when he saw me—the last person on earth he had expected? Perhaps you can a little, for I have described him to you in another letter, when I first began to realize that he was the only man in the world for me.

He turned red, and then pale; and it was not till he had turned pale that I saw how he had changed in the few days since I had met him last. He was thinner, and looked years older. He had lost all boyishness of expression. There were dark lines under his eyes, as if he had not slept, and there were haggard hollows in his cheeks. He might have had a week's desperate illness, and have got up out of bed to help his brother welcome the royalties; yet in his letter he had said no word of being ill, and I didn't believe that he had been ill—physically.

I now saw Lord Kilgard for the first time, an extraordinarily handsome, sad-faced man who looked nearer forty than thirty; and between him and the Teddy of a week ago there was little likeness, but now there was a striking resemblance. It was so striking that it made my heart ache, and all my soul

yearned over Teddy in his mysterious trouble.

Of course, he and I met like ordinary acquaintances, but I was sure he knew that I had come for a purpose. His brother and I were introduced to each other, and I fancied I saw a look in Lord Kilgard's eyes which said that he had heard all about me from Teddy.

Hours passed before there was a chance for a word in private with my poor boy, and even when the chance did come, he would have avoided it if he could. He confessed that! He was afraid of me, he said—of my power over him, which his love gave me. Oh, I was glad of that confession, and I'm not ashamed to say I made the most of my power, from that minute! When I cried bitterly, and begged to know if he no longer loved me, all his studied coldness melted like a snow-wreath in the sun. He took me in his arms and held me tight—tight. I clung to him, too, even when in a kind of passionate remorse he would have put me away; and standing so close to each other's hearts, which beat together as if they were one heart, he told me brokenly what I said to you on the first page of this letter—that it was because he loved me so much, he must, for my sake, give me up. Of course I refused to be given up.

"Nothing can come between us!" I said.

"I thought so, too, once," he answered; "but now I see that something can, and must."

"For a little while," I said. "Not for always."

"Yes, for always," he insisted. "I shall never marry."

With that I spoke out frankly. "Is it because of the family secret?"

He started. "Who told you about that?" he wanted to know.

I evaded the question. "It seems to be a thing that every one gossips about. You might have been the first one to warn me."

"I never attached much importance to it," he answered quickly. "It is not a thing ever spoken about in our family."



"Ah, then you do attach importance to it now?" I caught him up.

"I cannot talk to you about it," he said.

"But, if you refuse, you will make me imagine it worse than it is," I pleaded.

"Impossible!" he blurted out; then looked aghast at the admission inadvertently made.

"I see, it is true. There is something dreadful," I said. "But it can't be dreadful enough to part us. For Heaven's sake let me share the burden with you, whatever it is."

"I would rather die a thousand times than it should fall on you, my darling," he almost groaned.

"Has no woman ever known?" I asked.

"Only one. And it killed her."

"Lord Kilgard's wife!" I cried sharply.

"Ah, you have heard that story, too!"

"Yes. Oh, Teddy, is there some horrible curse upon this house? If there is, come away, come away, and it can't touch you."

"It would touch me at the uttermost end of the earth," he answered. "But for the love of Heaven don't torture me with questions. It is torture, for I can't answer them. There is no help for it, my best beloved. We've got to part."

"I won't consent," I said obstinately. "Not while you love me."

"Then I shall be driven to tell you that I don't love you."

"I won't believe it," I cried. But I didn't go on begging him to tell me things. I saw that it would be of no use. And I was almost glad an interruption came just then, for I had an idea in my head that I wanted to work out—and work out alone.

When I could get to my own room, I began to think, harder than I ever thought before in my whole life.

"The secret, whatever it is, is in this house," I told myself. "It must be something tangible, or, at least, something that can be seen, since Teddy admits that finding it out killed his brother's young wife; and the duchess said she died with a look of agonizing fear

on her face, as if she had seen a ghastly sight in her last moments."

So I went on thinking, trying to call back every word the duchess had spoken. She had told me how the girl could not be found, though a long search was made for her the night when her husband had left her alone, while he watched beside his dying father. For hours they looked for her in vain, and at last discovered her in an unused part of the house. That seemed to mean that she had hidden herself very well indeed, in a place where there was little reason to expect that she would have strayed. Maybe the "unused part" of the house might be translated a little differently as "secret part"?

Many old houses had secret rooms, I knew, and it was very likely indeed, I thought, that an ancient stronghold of this type had more than one. If gossip whispered about a secret hidden away in some forgotten corner of Castle Kilgard, and the wife of the heir had heard of it before her marriage, what a temptation for her to seek it out! I imagined her questioning her husband, who at that time, and at the age of twenty-three, could have known little more than she. I imagined his telling her to "let the thing alone," and thereby exciting her girlish curiosity. I saw her seizing the first opportunity to explore—failing once or twice, perhaps, and then—

At the last thought, where my imaginings broke off, a shiver crept through me. I saw myself in her place, and I was afraid, yes, physically afraid. It was all I could do to pull myself together, remembering the grand duchess' exhortation to courage. Courage! To save our happiness—Teddy's and mine.

I suppose courage will always come, if you call it. Mine came, and I was able to think again, to deduce one thing from another, and to piece my deductions together.

I reminded myself of the fact that the "curse" must have fallen upon the O'Malley family a long time ago, since it had been the custom, from generation



*He was afraid of me, he said—of my power over him, which his love gave me.*

to generation, for the men of the family to learn the secret on the twenty-eighth birthday. Therefore, if there was anything horrid to see, it must have existed for at least a hundred years, and thus could hardly be a living thing. From this thought, I went on to another. Who was the person whose duty it was to pass on the secret from one member of the family to the other? For instance, if Lord Kilgard had not learned the truth in a violent and terrible way, through the death of his bride, when he was twenty-three, who would have told him on the fated twen-

ty-eighth birthday, seeing that old Lord Kilgard lay on his deathbed the night when the tragedy occurred?

Was there some old manuscript which had to be read, perhaps? If not, how was the secret handed on from generation to generation, since it was certain that at one time or another an heir of the house must have reached the appointed age as an orphan?

This question puzzled me exceedingly, and I asked myself if some old trusted servant could have been initiated in the mystery, in early days, and have been allowed to impart what he knew

to his sons, so that, if elder members of the family failed, there might still be some one who knew.

Already I had seen a number of servants, but none I could imagine as filling a position of supreme trust. There was a hall porter, and there were droves of powdered footmen. There was a butler, and a person who might be an under butler. There was a groom of the chambers; there was a dignified elderly housekeeper, and there were many neat, rosy-cheeked maids. Yet even the irreproachable butler did not appear wonderful enough to have had a dead secret handed on to him from generations of impeccable forbears. Still, there might be some one whom I had not yet seen, and I determined to keep my surmises on that line, until I had gone further.

All that was only yesterday, though weeks seem to have passed since we came to Castle Kilgard. And the day after to-morrow, in the morning, the Duke and Duchess of Connaught are to leave Kilgard. I must leave with them, of course. That goes without saying. And think what a little while I have before me!

All that I have been able to do since coming to these conclusions I will now tell you. Heaven knows it isn't much.

Circumspectly, as tactfully as I knew how—though even so it must have appeared strange and ill-bred—I have questioned the maid who “does” the charming tower room which has been allotted me. I have asked her, as if carelessly, whether Lord Kilgard passes most of his time at the castle, and whether, in his absence, it was ever let. The girl was horrified at such an idea. Let Castle Kilgard! Oh, no, indeed! When Lord Kilgard was away—which he hadn't been, for a year—Mr. Fitzbrian had charge of everything.

Who was Mr. Fitzbrian? I promptly wished to be informed.

Mr. Fitzbrian was—well, on reflection, the maid thought he might be called a steward, though to be sure he was more than a steward, although he had nothing to do outside of the house. He was confidential man, and managed

a great deal of business for his lordship, as he had for the old lord, in his time.

“Ah,” said I, trying to speak indifferently; “Mr. Fitzbrian is old, then?”

“Not exactly old, your ladyship. Forty-five, maybe.”

“Young to have managed things for his lordship's father, who died years ago.”

“Yes, your ladyship; but it's different with him from others, for his father before him was trusted man, and so on, back, for over a hundred years, they do say. Always the Fitzbrians were trusted men to their lordships; and I suppose it will be the same with Mr. Fitzbrian's son. None of us in the castle can think what it would be here, any other way.”

I actually began to feel as if I were on the eve of making a discovery, though, of course, it was silly to feel like that.

“Is there a Mrs. Fitzbrian?” I asked, not caring very much now whether the girl thought my questions bad form—as any well-trained servant would.

Naturally she had to answer, no matter how deeply she may have been inwardly disapproving of my curiosity.

“There was a Mrs. Fitzbrian till a few years ago, your ladyship; she died soon after the birth of the son. They do say that none of the Mrs. Fitzbrians has lived long, so far back as the oldest folks' memories go; wives of former Mr. Fitzbrians, I mean.”

“Do the family live in the castle?” I inquired.

“Mr. Fitzbrian does. His son is away at school, and has been since he was six years old. Mr. Fitzbrian has what is called the Treasure Tower to himself?”

“Was treasure ever kept there?”

“The legend is that great treasure was found buried underneath, a long time ago. But it has been occupied for generations by the Fitzbrian family, so maybe some day in the future it will get to be known as Fitzbrian Tower, especially as the Fitzbrians—”

She stopped short at that, but I made her go on, and no doubt she was afraid

to try and change what she had been about to say into something else, on second thoughts. She stammered out that there was a story—it was only gossip, which she ought not to repeat—that the Fitzbrians were related, “on the left hand,” to the great O’Malley family, and that was the reason they had first become confidential men to their lordships, many, many years ago, when grand folk had different ways and manners from what they had nowadays.

As the girl reluctantly made these admissions, blushing, I decided to go further with my ill-bred catechisings than I had dreamed of going at first. “All is fair in love!” I told myself, “and I mayn’t have another chance of any sort, even as good as this.” So I boldly inquired whether there was talk among the servants of a secret in the castle. Oh, how red and shocked she looked at that! I was ashamed of myself; yet I was ready to go on.

She could not deny, since “my ladyship” asked the question, that there was talk, but only among the young servants. It was more than their place was worth if Mrs. Rainey, the housekeeper, heard so much as a whisper. What was the rumor? Well, if my ladyship must know, it was about a secret room, so well hidden no one could find it out, no matter how they might search, and some awful, incredible horror hidden in it, which—which each young gentleman of the immediate family must see when he was twenty-eight; and after that he never smiled again.

“Were any of the servants ever curious enough to try and search for the secret room?” I persisted.

“Not since her young ladyship was found dead, anyhow,” replied the girl, very pale and troubled now. “No one would dare, for their lives; but they do say there were those who searched before, and were sent away without warning, though they found nothing at all, ever. But all that was before my day in the castle. My aunt was here then, and I’ve heard her tell things, since she married and left the place free for me.

So it goes here, your ladyship. The same families serve in the castle, from generation to generation.”

“To save gossip from spreading about, outside,” I said to myself. But I didn’t say it aloud. I asked instead if she would tell me some of the stories she had had from her aunt.

There was only one worth repeating, she answered; the story of a young lady who came to visit at Kilgard in the late countess’ day, when his lordship as was at present was a boy, and the captain, a little child. The visitor pretended to be ill one day when there was a picnic, and all the family and their guests absent from the castle. Then, when they were well out of the way, she flew from room to room, not missing one of the hundred or so, except the servants’ quarters, placing little strips of bright red ribbon in each window, so it could be seen from outside. Her idea was to discover whether there was a window in which nothing had been pinned; and when all was done she ran out, to have a walk round and see what she could see. But she came face to face with Mr. Fitzbrian, who just gave her one look, and she knew instantly that he guessed what she was up to, even if he hadn’t been watching. So she wasn’t surprised to receive a note that night from old Lord Kilgard saying the carriage would come for her the first thing in the morning, and she could explain, if she liked, to everybody that she had been suddenly called home.

I despised that girl, dearest mademoiselle, as I listened to the tale of her disgrace, but I couldn’t help being a tiny bit sorry for her, too—and a little more frightened than ever for myself.

I am sorry still. I am frightened still. There is so much to do, and I don’t know where or how to begin! Writing you has helped me to think. I have stopped to read my whole letter through, that I might see how the situation looked, set forth on paper. I wonder if it will seem to you, as it does to me, that Mr. Fitzbrian and his forbears loom very large in the shadow of this mystery?

I will leave this open, and add more when I have done—or tried to do—a thing which has just come into my head.

*Wednesday night.*

I have seen Mr. Fitzbrian, and dislike him. I feel he's not a man one would choose as a confidential person, unless there were some reason other than his qualities to recommend him.

Probably you've guessed already that the thing I wanted to do was to see him. I made a plan, and it turned out to be a good one. I told Lord Kilgard I was anxious to set about the restoration of Dalmarre Castle, and that I'd heard he had done a good deal for the oldest parts of Castle Kilgard. Could he advise me as to the money I might have to lay out? When he looked rather blank, I went on to say I had heard of his steward—a Mr. Fitzbrian. Would Mr. Fitzbrian be a good man to consult on such matters?

Lord Kilgard answered that Fitzbrian would know what the restorations at Kilgard had cost, and even if his advice weren't worth much, his knowledge was at my disposal. At that I begged to be taken to Mr. Fitzbrian.

As the maid said, Mr. Fitzbrian has a whole tower in the castle set apart for his own use. On the ground floor is his office, or study, which is dining room and sitting room as well—a beautiful room, with windows set deep in the enormously thick walls, and a view over rocks and sea.

He had evidently been writing when we arrived, for his pen was in his hand, and there were papers scattered on a desk. A giant of a man, my dear; fat, and stooping, with the appearance of great reserve strength. A large head, a big, cruel mouth, a strong and heavy chin, a curiously thin nose of aquiline shape, out of keeping with his other features, and eyes that look as if they had died in his face. I can't describe them in any other way. They are dead eyes, and they give the most horrid effect. His hair is reddish-brown and thin, and he wears a slight, spidery mustache. I should think him older than the girl said, perhaps nearly fifty,

and he takes pains with his appearance and dresses well.

His manner with Lord Kilgard is respectful, but not servile; more like the manner of a solicitor with a client than a steward with his employer.

When Lord Kilgard introduced me as Lady Dalmarre, Fitzbrian looked at me in such a way with his dead eyes, that I fancied he had heard my name, and knew all about me, perhaps, though he made no remark. He took down several books from a shelf when he heard what was wanted, read out how much had been spent on the restoration of certain walls and towers, the making of new chimneys and roofs, and supplying the castle with electric light. I hardly listened, and by the time he had finished I'd made up my mind that he was a secret and dreadful man, capable of any unscrupulous act, and incapable of affection or loyalty. "Whatever there is, he knows," I said to myself.

That is as far as I have gone yet. But I believe if I could watch Mr. Fitzbrian's movements for a few days, without being suspected, I should learn something about the mystery of Castle Kilgard.

If only there were other days after to-morrow! Shall I fall ill, and be unable to move from Kilgard?

I forgot to say that we have a hostess. She is such a mild, meek little body that it is no wonder I passed her over in telling you of more important people and things. She is a Miss Delancey, an aunt of Lord Kilgard's and Teddy's, on their mother's side; a little, old maid of between fifty and sixty, timid as a child, but gentle and sweet. If I should happen to be ill, and have to stay, I know she would be kind. The duke and duchess and all their suite would have to go on, according to programme, of course, and I—if I thought I could find out things, I would be ill. I'm not sure I don't feel it coming on!

*Thursday.*

I really have a cold, and I'm making the most of it. It's extraordinary how seedy you can feel if you try hard



enough. I've even got a "temperature." The doctor has been, and the dear, kind man has ordered me to stop in bed. That's just what I wanted. I mean, the order. As for obeying it—but we shall see.

I have got more things out of the little maid. It took a lace blouse and a pearl and turquoise brooch to win her entirely. She is now my creature—my slave. I have learned what is said by the gossips at home and abroad about the secret. This girl and all the young servants in the house believe the story. I wonder they dare live in the castle. Jeannie had the tale from her aunt. It is horrible. They say that the fifth earl of Kilgard, who died a hundred and thirty years ago, was a wicked and cruel man. He pretended to love a beautiful young Irish girl, and promised to marry her, though all the time he was engaged to an heiress who lived in the north of England. In those days news traveled slowly. He went away telling his Irish sweetheart that he would soon be back, bringing something which would surprise her. The "surprise" he brought was a bride; and the night after the newly married couple arrived, the poor girl killed herself. She had no father or brothers to avenge her, but her mother managed to get into the castle, appear before the cruel Lord Kilgard and his new wife, and curse them both, with an undying curse. She cursed them in their married life and

in their eldest child. "May he be as horrible in the eyes of men as is your sin to my dead child in the sight of God!" she cried. "And may my curse never die, while there is wickedness in the heart of an O'Malley of Kilgard."

When a son was born, before the end of the first year of their marriage, he was a monster, so the story goes. So awful to look at was the baby, that the doctor and nurse agreed to let it

die, rather than its mother should set eyes upon it. But it would not die, and they had to let it live. Eventually, when the mother was strong enough, she asked to see her son. They put her off; she insisted; and at last she had her way. The sight killed her. Lord Kilgard, her husband, had the awful creature hidden in a secret part of the house, and watched over by some trusty person, who—the story says—was a Fitzbrian, and a distant relative of the old woman who had cursed the Kilgards.

After a few years the widower married again, and had a son who looked like other people, but turned out to be more wild and wicked than his father. That was supposed to be part of the never-dying curse. In almost every generation of the family since, little Jeannie hinted in an awed whisper, there has been one son in whom something was lacking; there have been blind O'Malleys, wicked O'Malleys, mad O'Malleys; and worse than all, the monster still lives and is kept in the castle. Each young



*They are dead eyes, and they give the most horrid effect.*



man of the immediate family is told the ghastly secret on the day he is twenty-eight, and is taken to see the indescribable creature in the hidden room. Then, when he knows of the curse, he can choose whether to marry or not.

All have so chosen, sooner or later, though several took wives only when they were middle-aged, and saw the fortune and estates in danger of going to some distant relative whom they particularly disliked. The present Lord Kilgard, of course, married before he knew; and, according to Jeannie, the young bride, in searching for the secret of which she had heard, was frightened to death by the sight of it, when she had succeeded in her quest.

I asked how it could be, if she were found dead in some hidden room, that the place could still remain secret, but Jeannie says it was her husband, Lord Kilgard himself, who found her, and brought her back to her own room. So nobody but he knew where she had been, and he never told—or if he did mention the place, he probably misled those to whom he was obliged to explain the circumstances—the doctor and coroner, perhaps—for there was an inquest, and Jeannie's aunt was living in the castle at the time.

Of course you will say that this old tale is absurd, and it does seem so, doesn't it? If the hidden monster of the story were alive he would be nearly a hundred and fifty years old. He would be the real heir, too. Only think of it! All the other sons who have been born in the family since would have been usurpers of his rights. I don't believe it. I can't. This isn't an age of miracles. Yet, there is something about Castle Kilgard which bewitches you into feeling that almost anything might happen. It is a strange and wonderful old house.

If the person who guarded the creature in old days was a Fitzbrian, and a relative of the betrayed girl, then he would have had an object in wishing evil to any O'Malley, wouldn't he? I hardly know what is working in my mind. But I am going to watch this Mr. Fitzbrian, and see where he goes.

Only the worst is that if there *be* a secret it is probably hidden in his own tower. That would be a reason for giving it to him, all for himself, wouldn't it? Such a huge old tower it is—the oldest part of the house, and it seems there have been ghost stories and murder stories connected with it ever since the twelfth century, so that even if there were nothing else, there's enough to keep superstitious Irish servants from prying about after dark.

#### *Friday afternoon.*

The duke and duchess and their suite have gone. Miss Delancey is very kind, and comes to see me in my room, where I am shut up with all the airs of an invalid. She says that her nephews—Lord Kilgard and Teddy—"send kind messages." How little she knows what messages one of the nephews would like to send, and I to receive! Teddy's leave is up, and he is to go to-morrow. Not another word have we two had together alone since the first, and I am so anxious, so miserable. But I dreamed last night that an old woman who looked like a witch came and put a queer, big key into my hand. "It is for you to open the prison door," she said. I wonder if that is a sign. Would that I could open the door which would release Teddy and his brother from the prison of unhappiness!

Looking out of my window, when I was supposed to be taking a nap, I saw Mr. Fitzbrian go out, walking fast and looking anxious. At least, his back looked anxious, somehow. I couldn't see his face. Soon after, Jeannie came to answer my bell, and I asked her if Mr. Fitzbrian always went for a walk in the twilight. She said no, he hardly ever stirred from the house except in the morning. By and by it will be dinner time; and I shall steal out of my room, and see what I can discover in the Fitzbrian tower, while the man is away. I am a little frightened, but I tell myself it is for Teddy. If anything should happen to me he will perhaps come across this letter and read it. I hope so. I should like him to under-

stand that I didn't do what I am going to do out of vulgar curiosity. Au revoir, dearest. If you knew, you would wish me luck.

*After midnight.*

I can't wait to write you all that has happened. But I am half dazed still. I hardly know what to say.

I dressed myself in a dark purple tea gown, almost black—the darkest thing I had, so that I might hide in the shadows, as if I were a shadow myself. Over my head and shoulders I threw a black Spanish lace mantilla that the Queen of Spain sent me, after the Carmonceux visit. I did look like a wraith, in the twilight!

Though part of the castle is lit by electricity, it hasn't all been done yet, and the halls and corridors, with their stone walls and deep-set windows, are dimly lighted at best, in the oldest parts.

Nobody saw me flitting along to the door which opens into Mr. Fitzbrian's study, on the ground floor of his tower. I knocked, to make sure the room was empty, though I was almost certain he hadn't come back yet. No one answered; I turned the handle. To my joy the door was unlocked. A staircase in the room goes up to a gallery where there are quantities of bookshelves, and in the midst of these books, I had noticed, the other day, a low-curtained door. I half hoped it would be locked—because, if not, it didn't seem likely that there could be anything behind it worth hiding—and that I should somehow find the key, in fulfillment of my dream. But the door wasn't locked, and opening it I found that it led to a stairway winding up to the floors above. I knew already that there were five stories in the tower, because I had counted the tiers of little deep-set windows from outside.

There was no light, nor did there seem to be any means of obtaining it here; but there were slits of windows, through which faint streaks of moonlight glimmered, and I could just find my way up the winding stairs. At the next story I stopped and peeped into the room, whose door was unlocked. It was a sitting room, where pieces of

large, old-fashioned furniture loomed large and black in the silvery twilight. So on, up to the top, with one room for each story, making the two sitting rooms on the ground and first floors, and three bedrooms above. On the fifth floor the staircase came to an end. The room was used as a storeroom, apparently, for there were boxes and trunks, and the bed had no covering or drapery. But one thing struck me as being rather odd, perhaps. It was considerably smaller than the rooms below, having thicker walls, and the windows being in consequence even deeper set. Did this mean anything? I wondered. The ceiling, too, was very low. I thought it might touch the head of a tall man like Teddy, while Mr. Fitzbrian, who is even taller, would certainly be obliged to stoop.

"What if there were a secret room above this?" I thought. And the more I thought, the more plausible the idea seemed; for a room over this could easily be lighted and ventilated by means of a skylight, and there was space inside the wall for a small hidden staircase. With a Fitzbrian ever guarding the tower, like a faithful watchdog, how well a secret might be kept here, for generation after generation. Ascending the stairs from the ground floor I could see that each room as I came up was lower in the ceiling than the one beneath. The difference was so slight—except in the fifth-story room—that unless I had been on the lookout for something odd, I should hardly have observed it. But having observed I realized that, though the tower appeared to be but five stories high, there might easily be a sixth room at the top, with a skylight, whose existence need never be suspected by any one looking up from below. No wonder the girl who had tried putting red ribbons in the windows had failed to discover the hidden room. By and by, in these days of balloons and aeroplanes, some one might hit upon the secret; but when it was first designed there was no danger of this sort.

I flattered myself that my stolen visit was not entirely without result; but



*"Poor wretch! He will lie as he lies now, for a few hours at most, and then death will come, peacefully."*

suddenly, as I was hesitating whether or not to get back to my own quarters, satisfied for the time with what I had seen and surmised, I almost started at a question which seemed to ask itself in my ears:

"Why not wait and hide here, in the hope that Mr. Fitzbrian may come up before long, and perhaps betray the existence of a hidden door to a stairway in the wall?"

With my heart pounding like a ham-

mer, I decided that I would do this. There was not much fear of my absence from my own room being discovered by any one who mattered, as Miss Delancey had paid her last visit, I had had a cup of arrowroot, and was supposed to be asleep. The servants would wait for me to ring, at least until after ten, and it was now only a little past eight.

There was a big old-fashioned wardrobe in the room, and having tested

the back to make sure that there was no concealed door there, I curled myself up inside, sitting on the floor, hidden behind a long, musty-smelling cloak which hung from a nail, the door open only just enough to give me a little air—not enough to appear to be open.

You see, my theory was—if I had a theory!—that in case anything living really were hidden at the top of the tower, it would have to be fed; and if it had to be fed, Mr. Fitzbrian must be the man who fed it.

It seemed that I sat huddled there, in the close darkness of the wardrobe, with just a streak of silver between the doors, for half the night; but I knew afterward that scarcely two hours had passed, when I heard footsteps on the stairs. Then, as the door opened, Mr. Fitzbrian's voice, speaking in a low tone.

"Wait where you are for a moment," he said.

"I am thankful to wait," panted another voice. "I am out of breath. Have we come to the top of the stairs?"

"A little way to go, still," said Mr. Fitzbrian soothingly.

"I should like to take the bandage off my eyes," pleaded the other.

"Not quite yet. Patience for a moment more."

There was a slight click, like a key turning in a lock, and another, a second or two after, shriller and sharper, as if a spring had been touched. Again, there was a sound of footsteps on stairs, and summoning up all my courage, I pushed open the wardrobe door. Luckily, it didn't creak!

The bright moonlight, streaming through an east window, showed me an empty room. I tiptoed to the door by which I had come in, and found it locked. Mr. Fitzbrian had turned the key. Carefully I turned it back, drew out the key, and inserted it noiselessly on the other side of the door. This precaution taken, I tiptoed noiselessly about, feeling for an opening in the wall, and not far from the wardrobe, I found it. Mr. Fitzbrian had touched a spring, making a panel slide back

behind another, and had considered it safe to leave the way open behind him.

The open place was like a shadow blacker than all other shadows, and I could see nothing on the other side, so I groped with both hands, and discovered a steep, narrow stairway, almost like a ladder.

As I started to go up, I couldn't help thinking of Lady Kilgard, and how she had died. Probably she had somehow made the discovery I had made; had climbed the stairs I was about to climb, and had fallen back, horror-struck at the sight I was about to see. It was all I could do not to run away, but I remembered how the grand duchess had said my courage might save our happiness, Teddy's and mine. Such a stake was worth risking death for, I thought; and then I began crawling up the steep stairs, softly—softly.

I didn't go quite to the top at first, for light filtered down to me, a yellow, flickering light, as of newly lit candles.

"Can you do anything for him, doctor?" I heard Mr. Fitzbrian ask anxiously.

"Ah! It is a doctor he has brought into the tower, with his eyes bandaged!" was the quick thought which flashed through my brain. I guessed instantly that Mr. Fitzbrian must have fetched a medical man from a distance, since it was evident that the doctor was not to know where he was or whom he attended. A man of the neighborhood would have recognized Fitzbrian's face. And such precautions made me sure that neither Lord Kilgard nor his brother had been consulted as to the doctor's visit. If they had desired it, one at least would be here now, to hear the professional verdict which Mr. Fitzbrian awaited with so much anxiety.

The doctor hesitated a moment before answering the question. Then he said: "If you really wished to save this unfortunate creature, you should have come for me sooner."

"There were reasons which made it difficult to come at all. He has had such attacks before, and recovered. You think that he is very dangerously ill?"

"He is dying."

"I hope that you may be able to save him."

"Poor wretch! His life must have been an almost insupportable burden. It would be my duty to prolong it if I could, but it is not possible. He will lie as he lies now, for a few hours at most, and then death will come, peacefully."

"I would gladly give you five hundred pounds to save him, if only for a few weeks."

"If you gave me five hundred thousand it would still be impossible."

"Well—if that is your final opinion, I must resign myself to the inevitable. How many hours at longest before he goes?"

"Two or three. Not more."

"What must be, must be. I have your promise that you will stay to the end, and as soon as all is over, you will embalm the body."

"I gave you my promise, but if I had known what sort of patient I should find—"

"That can make no difference. A bargain is a bargain."

"Oh!" exclaimed the stranger, with some bitterness. "You needn't remind me that even the half fee you handed me before starting on this adventure is more than I earn in ordinary practice in six months. But—"

"If the task is so repugnant to you, when I pay the second half at your door, on taking you home, I will add another fifty pounds. You need have no scruples in accepting. This is an affair of grave importance for me."

"So I judge."

"You are certain you brought everything that is necessary?"

"Certain. It wasn't likely I should forget anything in such circumstances."

"Then there is nothing else to do now, but watch for the end?"

"Nothing else."

I waited for no more, but having seen nothing, crept down the few steps I had mounted, stole to the door, slipped out, turned the key in the lock, and flew down the tower stairs.

I did not go to my own room, where I was supposed to be peacefully asleep,

but without meeting a soul found my way to the great library. I was just about to ring for a servant, and ask to see Captain O'Malley, when a footman passed the open door. I gave him a message for Teddy, and three or four minutes later my dear boy came to me.

"Dearest!" he said. "What would your doctor say if he knew how imprudent—"

I cut him short with a confession. I told him that I was not ill, and had not been ill. That I had pretended to be suffering, in order to be left behind and find out the secret which was keeping us apart—oh, not through vulgar curiosity, but because I suspected some dreadful fraud, and wanted to save our happiness if I could. Then, without giving him time to speak, I went on to say how, instinctively, I had suspected Mr. Fitzbrian; how it had occurred to me that there might have been a conspiracy, handed on from father to son, for generations, to keep their own importance and position of trust in the castle.

"Is it true," I asked, "that the fifth Lord Kilgard died leaving a deformed son, an idiot, who lived to be very, very old?"

"Since you know so much, it is true."

"And you all believe that he lives still?"

"We are obliged to believe the evidence of our own eyes. The undying curse!"

"But if it is not undying? If that is a mere superstition? How often does each man of your family, when he had been told the secret, see this undying monster who—"

"Once only! And that once is enough to haunt him to his death."

"Then it would have been comparatively easy for a Fitzbrian to conceal the death of his charge, and smuggle another deformed creature into the secret room of the tower, to take the dead one's place."

"Great Heaven! What a ghastly thought! No man would be base enough!"

"I believe this man would. Why not



his father and grandfather? They had no reason to love your family, if the whole story is true, and they had everything to gain by carrying on a deception."

"Each one has been paid two thousand pounds a year for his services, it is true. They seemed worth it."

"Go quickly and tell your brother what I have heard in the tower," I said. "Never mind what he thinks of me. If I'm right—if this is a plot—he'll forgive me. If I'm mistaken, I'll go away and neither of you need ever see, or think of, me again. Those two, Fitzbrian and the doctor he has bribed and smuggled in, blindfold, are locked up there together. Probably they don't know yet that they are prisoners. But for Heaven's sake, Teddy, don't give them a chance to escape. Make the doctor tell you how old is the creature who is dying there. Make that wicked wretch Fitzbrian confess everything. He will be forced to confess, when he's confronted there, with the doctor. He will have to speak the truth. How, to provide against accidental discovery, the dead body was to be embalmed—perhaps that it might seem to be asleep, if you or Lord Kilgard should make an unexpected visit before he could find, somewhere in the world, another

horror to put in this one's place. Oh, go, go—and when you have got the truth out of Fitzbrian come and tell me, here!"

He went—and I waited. Dearest, I never dreamed before what one could suffer from suspense. I thought my hair would turn white, but I'm very glad to say it didn't. I've looked since to see, and it does seem wonderful that I don't appear at all changed, or older.

They did make Fitzbrian confess, and cringe for forgiveness, like the vile coward he is. The doctor said that the deformed creature was certainly no more than fifty years old, and that he was a Eurasian. It was all exactly as I had suspected, and Teddy and Lord Kilgard both think me a kind of fairy. But it was only from having courage, and keeping my head.

The horrible Fitzbrian man deserves to be killed, but nothing will be done to him, except to send him away. Naturally the family doesn't want a scandal.

Oh, dearest, I am so happy! There is no obstacle between Teddy and me now—no "undying curse," no curse of any sort, but a blessing. And Lord Kilgard and Princess Vida can be happy, too.

Your loving and beatified  
PEGGY.







*Sometimes when I go to see her and we are taking a cup of tea together.*

## My Stage Career

By Virginia Middleton

ILLUSTRATED BY H. VON S. LUCAS

### I.—Getting on the Stage

ONE of my very good friends is a star, famed for her personal following of young girls. Sometimes when I go to see her and we are taking a cup of tea together, we are interrupted by the arrival of special-delivery letters, of special-messenger letters, of registered letters, and when she has read them she hands them over to me with a groan.

No, they are not from those mythical haunters of stage doors, the "Johnnies"; my friend's eyes twinkle as she solemnly relates that she has never in all her long career—she began to act in her mother's arms—received a "mash note." Neither are they always,

or even often, invitations from Greatness, social, political, financial, or whatever sort, for the star to come and dine, to spend Sunday in some lovely place, to go motoring. They are generally notes from young girls and women who are frantic "to go on the stage," and who confidently appeal to Miss Armistice for instruction in the art of getting there, and of staying there when once they are placed. They are all naively sure that success like Kate Armistice's own awaits them.

When Kate passes these notes to me, I am always conscious of a feeling of pride. Once I, too, was a stage-struck girl—and I displayed the heroic self-re-

straint of never writing to the Kate Armistice of that earlier period for advice! Once I was a stage-struck girl, and in time I actually achieved the stage, without ever swelling the volume of any popular actress' mail, or helping to bend the back of any over-worked postman beneath his load. It is a just cause of pride.

"They ought to write to me, Kate," I tell her, "and ask my advice; and all those ladies' societies and girls' schools that want you to address them should take me instead. For out of every thousand who write to you, there are fifty Mary Piersons to two Kate Armistices, and it's my experience—the typical experience; not yours, the brilliant exception—which the instructors of youth ought to strive to place before the young persons committed to their charge."

"It's queer, Mary," says the great star, with the sweetness and modesty which is her abounding gift, "that mine should be the success and yours just the—well, just the everyday thing. For you're a lot cleverer than I am about every other created thing; and you're a much more intelligent woman; and a better educated one. Ah, well! Never mind, my dear, some day your big chance will come!"

That she is probably quite wrong in her prophecy does not make it less pleasant to hear. I shake my head and smile and thank her, and again my mind reverts to the girls who write the letters. How much more illuminating ought my story to be to them than that of Kate Armistice. For the one among them who is destined to duplicate in any measure that reigning favorite's career will do it without advice or warning or teaching; she will do it by the sheer gift of personality or of talent. She will be undeterred by doleful prognostication, by gloomy history, because she was "meant" to be an actress. She will win out despite hardships and roughnesses; perhaps she will lose some of what is known as the delicacy of woman, some of what is known as the bloom of maidenhood, in acquiring the rewards of the actress,

but she will have the satisfaction of knowing that she has not sacrificed these attributes for nothing. But for all the rest of the eager letter writers what is in store? At the best—unless they never even see the world from the other side of the footlights—a career like mine, who am accounted an actress of average ability, and who have, as the boys say, absolutely "no kick coming" about my fate.

Fifteen years ago, I lived in a comfortable, middle-Western city, where my people were well-to-do, though by no means wealthy, where the society, to call a simple thing by an imposing name, was neighborly, free, cheerful, and by no means uncultivated. I had been graduated with sufficient honors from the High School, in the entertainments of which I had always borne a prominent part. My mother was an active church worker in a parish renowned for the hold the church maintained over its young people; that means for the number and innocent liveliness of its bazaars, suppers, concerts, charades, and the like. I, as her daughter—perhaps the most "talented" of her daughters, for Melissa was better on layer cake than on recitations, and Agatha's forte was keeping the entertainment committee's accounts in an intelligible condition—was in constant demand for performances at these harmless merrymakings. Add to all this that I was seventeen years old and moderately good-looking, though no great beauty. Add, also, that the set in which I moved boasted an amateur theatrical club; the Vagabonds, as we called ourselves, with a delightful sense of our recklessness in the matter of nomenclature.

Windy River is on the circuit for many fair companies. The big "opera house" in Masonic Block is seldom without its attraction during eight months of the year, in the shape of a star, a play, or a company which succeeded in New York the last season, or the season before, or which may be destined to fail in New York later this season. So that we of the Vagabonds did not quite lack opportunity to

compare our own art with the more expert professional product. I cannot tell you how often I, mentally comparing my own conception of a part and my own conception of my acting with that presented on the stage, have been quite convinced that I was vastly more gifted than the lady who was essaying the leading rôle. I very seldom trou-

who had passed through the Normal School, and was now happily engaged in teaching one of the primary grades, and Melissa, who was qualifying as a public school teacher of domestic science—a profession which Windy River was delightedly hailing at the time—were unaffectedly horrified at my ambition. So was mother. The boys



*I was the most talented of her daughters, for Melissa was better on layer cake than on recitations.*

bled my head about comparing myself with any one lower than the leading woman.

Well, the result was inevitable. I wanted "to go on the stage." When the question of my future was mooted—for my father held that we should all, girls and boys alike, be capable of self-support—I passionately pleaded to be allowed to go on the stage. Agatha,

looked at me with the disapproval of those who are suddenly awakened to the discovery of criminal instincts in their own family circle. Really, I can scarcely help laughing now when I think of the state of provincial consternation into which a seventeen-year-old Windy Riverite once threw a family which rather prided itself on its breadth of view, its tolerance.

"Of course," said my mother, "there may be very good actresses—I mean actresses who are very good women, indeed—in the world. I should never dream of denying it. But—"

"Look at Mrs. Kendal!" I entreated her. "I'd like you to show me any one more respectable than she is!"

"I have just said that I do not question that there are a good many actresses who are good women and devoted mothers." Mother was beginning broad-mindedly in her Tuesday-afternoon-club manner. Then she interrupted herself. "No, I don't, either. They may be good women—some of them—but they can't be devoted mothers. Think of being maybe a thousand miles away from your baby when it has the croup in the night."

"I haven't any baby," I flippantly reminded my mother, and her reply sent me tingling from the room, and the discussion was dropped for the time being. But it was always resumed when the question of my future arose. Father, the most patient of them all with me, used to suggest counter attractions—stenography and typewriting, bookkeeping, the equipment for a secretarial position, or a library course, or a course in trained nursing—any serious pursuit. And I always put back my ears and set my teeth and declared that for me it was the stage or nothing. Finally we compromised—unlikely as the suggestion sounded—upon college. They—the family—said that at the close of four years in college I should be better able to weigh values and could make my decisions more wisely. I said—to myself—that I should take every course in the English dramatists which the institution offered. I was quite honest in thinking that such courses would advance me quickly upon the stage.

For two years I stayed in college, diligently perusing all the dramatic literature which the library contained, organizer of revels, president of the freshman amateur theatrical club, star of most of its performances. In my heart I was as stubbornly determined upon my career as ever—indeed, I was

more so. For college, whatever else it did for me, gave me that enormous belief in myself and my judgments which I seem to have observed among college girls since. I would be an actress—a great actress! I saw myself as *Marie Stuart*, a more magnificent creature than Modjeska in the rôle. I saw myself as *Beatrice*, mocking poor *Benedick* with a grace which Ada Rehan had never attained. I might consent to play a little in modern comedy—just to show how the thing could be done and to encourage the playwrights. But it was as the queenly women of Shakespeare, the witching belles of Sheridan, that I should be chiefly identified. Patronizingly, I decided that I would remain at college until the end of my course, feeling that I should thereby add somewhat to my own personal dignity when I did embark upon my stage career, and feeling, also, with the insolence of youth, that "there was plenty of time." I know better now. I know that after "the gift" itself, there is no such valuable asset for an actress as youth.

And then, while I was dawdling in a superior fashion through the present, and was picturing a future of wonderful triumphs, of immense personal popularity, of rich financial reward, of social importance; a future in which my occupation would be to become each night the centre of interest to thousands of persons, to wear lovely clothes, to be made love to by agreeable and distinguished men—on the stage, I mean—while I was picturing that future to myself, there came news that my father had met with heavy losses in his business, and that I must give up college and come home to help. I had a second's natural sympathy for my father, who, I conceded, might possibly think about his career in the world with at least something approaching the interest I took in mine; but my chief feeling was one of exultation. If he had lost money, if my help and that of the others was needed, why, they could no longer so violently oppose my project. I hurried home to tell them all that the almost immediate

rewards of the profession to which I had chosen to devote my talents were so large that father need have no real anxiety about his losses. I found that the family was rejoicing in having secured for me the position of visiting governess to the children of a wealthy family.

It was a stormy family conference. When I indignantly repudiated the wealthy family's children, every one looked reproachful. When I explained to father that Henry Irving's income or Richard Mansfield's would make his own seem a paltry affair; and that Julia Marlowe, playing a Shakespearian heroine, did more to elevate life than Agatha and Melissa combined would ever do; and that Ada Rehan could righteously squander more money in an afternoon than my sisters could earn in a month—when I declaimed after this manner, they all looked at me with sadness and reproach. Mother weepingly spoke of the temptations of the stage. I flashed a truly theatric look of contempt upon her for the suggestion, and demanded to know of what sort of corruptible material she thought her daughter made? Then the poor dear wailed that she meant, not moral dangers to her daughter—did she not realize my fine, high principles?—but actual dangers; dangers from railroad wrecks, dangers from drunken midnight marauders who might attack me on my way home after the play. I smiled disdain of trivialities like railroad disasters and implied that the streets of New York were well-lighted and police-patrolled, and that during the few months that might intervene before I should be in a cab-engaging position, they need not worry. And then my father aimed the final shot.

"How many actresses," he asked me, "do you estimate

spend more than a month a year in New York? And how many do you suppose ever pass beyond the street-car means of transportation?"

"Even in the beginning," I told him hotly, "an actress gets from twenty to thirty dollars a week." In Windy River, from twenty to thirty dollars a week for a single woman, without dependents, was regarded as a handsome income—for a wage-earner.

"How many weeks in the year does she have an engagement?" went on my father relentlessly.

I suppose I answered with great hardihood. I only remember the questions now because they were so wise; because they showed that my father, who knew nothing at all about the stage, knew more about it than I, whose cherished dream it was; I, who had



*I saw myself as Beatrice mocking poor Benedick.*

spent years in studying everything about it upon which I could lay my hands. But his wisdom was as nothing against my enthusiasm. Finally, after an almost all-night session, the family agreed to my demands. I was to be given two hundred dollars and be allowed to go to New York. I was nearly twenty years old, stubborn—at least in dealing with my own people—conceited, vastly ignorant of what lay before me. Probably if my parents had not yielded their consent to my project, I should have run away and managed in some way to gain my own ends.

Nevertheless, when I think that they did consent—however reluctantly—and that parents are always consenting, though reluctantly, to similar demands of their daughters, I am filled with a vast, uncomprehending admiration for the benevolence that manages the affairs of the unsophisticated.

I did not set forth for the Great White Way—I am not sure that it was called by that name in the period of which I am now writing—without another weapon than my two hundred dollars, my belief in my destiny, and the reassuring knowledge that once I had been actually upon the actual stage—a feminine “super,” escaped with other kindred spirits from her home, in a mob scene, the only time the Divine Sara had played for a night in Windy River. I had yet another key to open the door to success—one which I expected to be the real one.

In the days when my brothers were in the High School—some five or six years before my time—one of their companions had been a boy who was now dramatic critic on the *Windy River Enterprise*. This youth, Deering White—I recalled how the boys used to make him suffer agonies of embarrassment by calling him “Dear” in their unregenerate days—had been the one supporter of my ideas, the one firm believer in my talents. He did his part in fostering my ambition by often taking me to first-night performances when good companies came to Windy River. In the days when the

old Lyceum “stock” used to go on annual tour, he used to confirm my own impression that I had more winsome charm than Effie Shannon, more vivacity than Bessie Tyree, more dignity and coquetry and fire than poor Georgia Cayvan. Oh, he did his part in feeding my conceit! I was tall enough to imagine that some of the queenly rôles of Ada Rehan were not beyond me—queenliness seems to the amateur so largely a matter of inches!—and Deering White used to make me feel that I already had her “beaten.”

Well, when the time came, when my family's oppositions were down, it was Deering White who gave me my great weapon for the unlocking of managerial doors. He gave me a letter to THE great dramatic critic in New York, as we in Windy River imagined him, not knowing that all dramatic critics in New York are equally great, and equally important. It was not a sheer bluff on Deering's part. Since then I have known many a dramatic critic and many another who will give a letter of introduction meaning thereby no kindness to the recipient, but only desiring to rid himself of a tiresome importunity, and perhaps at the same time to intimate that he is on easy, give-and-take terms with greatness. But this was a bona-fide act of good will. And it meant something to me. Without that letter I don't see how I should have succeeded even as well as I did during that first dreadful month.

It was July when I landed in New York; I had explained to father and mother that, during the summer, one made one's contracts for the following season. By the particular blessing of Heaven—as I realize now—Mr. Angus Pennington had not left for London when I appeared upon the scene. He sailed two days later, but before he departed he gave me a letter—Oh, not the one my soul craved, not the one upon which I had counted, to the Napoleon of managers—but a nice little letter to a manager of whom I, in Windy River, had never even heard. In Windy River we had known of



few managers except Shakespeare and Daly and David Garrick. However, I accepted Mr. Pennington's note gratefully—more gratefully than his half-groaned advice, given with a shake of his fine, white head:

"Oh, you girls! Now, Miss Pierson, why don't you go back home and marry some nice young man, or teach calisthenics, or do anything else than this you have set your heart upon? You won't? You resent my suggesting it? Very well. I'll do the very best I can for you. I promised my young friend, White, to do him any favor he asked of me—any favor in my power, that is. That's a lad of promise, now. We'll have him here one of these days. Well, on his account, I'll do my best for you. And my best is so little that you'll think it worthless. I'll write to Greenfelt and ask him to give ten minutes to a young woman whom I don't know, about whose talents I can say not a single word. What's that? Oh, my dear child, don't be angry with an old man's plain speaking! I only want you to see for yourself that I can't tell Greenfelt that I am sending him the peerless *Juliet*, the incomparable *Lady Macbeth*! And now, won't you come out to luncheon with me and tell me all about my young friend, White?"

I went out to luncheon with him. I had presented my letter at his office, for Deering had forgotten his house address, and I had been somewhat awed and impressed by the great, dingy, impersonal machine—a New York daily paper. Out home, any one who had the entrée to the *Enterprise* office was at home once he had crossed the threshold. But in this great, gray hive it was different. However, I liked it well—the things one revels in as adventure at twenty which are inexpressibly grimy at thirty! And I felt it was a fine and appropriate thing for me to be lunching with one of the great dramatic critics of the country. It was only a question of a few seasons before the condescension in such a meeting would be on the other side; when critics, managers, playwrights,

and the theatric populace in general would be flattered at my nod.

I dwell a good deal upon these anticipations of mine—the anticipations of sure and glittering success, of personal following, of rich reward—because I do not believe that any girl has ever had stage aspirations who has not had those anticipations. A girl may become a typewriter, a seamstress, a school teacher, a cook, without any intoxicated and intoxicating illusions. But no girl ever goes on the stage without the radiant hope of a reward out of all proportion to the labor. She always sees herself admired, courted, imitated, for doing that which she likes to do, for being the centre of piquant or dramatic situations, for looking lovely, for wearing exquisite clothes, for having men quite mad about her perfections. She never sees herself as one of the unconsidered ones whose names she reads year after year upon her programme without ever really observing what they are. She is always Maude Adams, Ethel Barrymore, Ellen Terry.

However, I went to luncheon that day with Mr. Pennington, and felt moderately important at the occasion itself and tremendously important over the occasions to which it should be but a prelude. And I thanked him for his kindness, and promised that I would surely let him and Mrs. Pennington know where I was when they came home in the autumn—I did not know then how truly kind that reference to Mrs. Pennington was—"if I were still in the city;" a rather sinister utterance, I thought.

If I were still in the city! Mr. Pennington would probably be describing how I—an understudy of the quietest mien—had come on in an emergency and had taken the part of the leading woman in "Captain Letterblair," and how Mr. Sothern, under the spur of the new personality, had done the finest work of his career. I was generous in my prophetic character. I would let the star have a chance, also.

And then I took a car and went up to my boarding house, on Stuyvesant

Square. It was a boarding house which a Windy River girl who once adventured to New York with a palette and a paint brush had recommended to me. I found the price—eight dollars a week for a hall room and two meals a day—and the outlook over the square, with its fountain and its crowds of children, and its fringe of bright geraniums about the stone basin, and its mellow, old, red-brick Quaker meetinghouse at one corner and its brown, square-towered, stone St. George's Church at another, the most attractive things about the place. The landlady was lugubrious. My fellow boarders, swarming after dinner every evening over the flight of stone steps that led to the front door, a slangy, free-and-easy crowd, occupied with their own flirtations and feuds as the case might be, were unattractive. Moreover, they made no welcoming sign to me, except a stiff bow at the table and a few stilted words about the heat. The hall carpet was worn and the stair carpet a snare for the feet of the unwary. There was the usual odor of cookery in the passages, and my room under the eaves and on the north, unbreezy side of the house, was intolerably hot. However, it was only for a few weeks!

Of course, I could not let the grass grow beneath my feet. The companies, I was sure, were filling up, contracts were being made, candidates were being tried out. I used to close the door of my little hot box of a room and practice all sorts of speeches before the mirror. I was on successive evenings the *Lady of Lyons*, and *Lady Teale*, and poor *Ophelia*, and *Portia*. Somehow, I thought that Mr. Greenfelt would intelligently employ the ten minutes which Mr. Pennington had bespoken for me in testing out my ability.

I spent several evenings in these elocutionary pursuits, you will observe. That does not mean that I did not make an immediate effort to use my note, but only that I was not immediately successful. I thought that I would behave with great dignity, with a punctilious regard for Mr. Greenfelt's time and important engagements. So I wrote to him and told him that I had an introduction to him from Mr. Angus Pennington, of the *Spear*, which I should take pleasure in presenting at the most suitable moment, and that, awaiting his pleasure, I was very sincerely his, Mary Pierson. If I had continued to wait his pleasure I should have been sitting in that hall room on Stuyvesant Square yet—a dried-up mummy-monument of Mr. Greenfelt's dilatoriness.

But when I had allowed for all possible delays in the delivery of letters, and when I had recited everything I had ever learned in a whisper before my mirror, I decided to arm myself with Mr. Pennington's letter and to go beard the manager in his den. In my guilelessness I imagined that this would be easy.

I thought more about my costume than I have ever thought since concerning dress. Should I wear a simple dimity, such as was appropriate and becoming in Windy River? Should I wear a serge tailor-made, with the most mannish of shirt-waists and collars and ties? Large hat or small? Languishing heroine of romance, leading lady in embryo, or capable business woman—in which rôle should I make my first appearance before the great man? I decided upon the serge and the business woman. After all, I wanted to impress him with my breeding, my efficiency, as well as with my—I suppose I called it beauty in those days.

TO BE CONTINUED.



# WHEN TOPHET BROKE LOOSE



BY HOLMAN F. DAY

ILLUSTRATED BY CH. GRUNWALD

THE spectacle of a single plug hat on Main Street in Newry had long before become so common as to excite no comment. Hiram Look had accomplished that. He had clung to the badge of his old showman days in all weathers. But when the sunshine shimmered on two plug hats, people crooked their necks. Hiram Look was escorting a visiting friend along the thoroughfare of the shire town.

The stranger had a white vest and long mustaches and a blasé air. He examined shop windows and dead walls as they marched along. The windows and walls were radiant with lithographs advertising "Belmore Brothers' Leviathan Circus and Menagerie." Each lithograph bore the picture of a man with a plug hat, white vest, long mustaches, and a blasé air. It was the picture of the man who walked with Hiram Look, and it was plain that he and Hiram were old friends. Hiram introduced him as such to local dignitaries whom they met on the street. And with pride that glowed, he explained that the renowned Belmore had come on to Newry a day ahead of the show to look up his old friend, and

swap a few reminiscences of the days when they had trained together.

"And these are the county buildings," explained Hiram at the foot of the granite steps. "Come up with me and see Sheriff Sproul."

"No need of it—not the least," objected Mr. Belmore. "There ain't a game between the round top and the farthest peanut stand that's hot enough to sweat ten cents out of an oat chewer's wad. We ain't fixin', not this season. Don't have to."

"You don't think I'm tryin' to steer you against a touch, do you?" Hiram demanded indignantly. "He's my most particular friend. An old retired sea captain that got this office through me. I managed his campaign."

"Frisk horse of the tandem, eh?" remarked Mr. Belmore listlessly. "Well, don't let's back him out of the stall. I've had introductions enough. Let's go sit down somewhere private, and quiet."

"But you've got to meet him," insisted Hiram. "He's one of our kind. Hates Reubs as bad as you and I do. Gad, if you was knockin' 'em down with a club and takin' it away from

'em, like we did in the old days, he wouldn't advise leavin' 'em the price of peanuts." He elbowed the circus man toward the steps. "Come along up. He's all right."

"He don't sound like it, a fellow that *you* could manage into office," retorted Mr. Belmore, with lumbering attempt at jest. "But if you insist, I'll go up and dent old Sofa Cushion just once for luck."

Hiram took a friend's privilege and marched through the turnkey's room, threw open the door of the sheriff's private office, and ushered in his companion. The little room was well filled with men. They were standing in rows, in a sort of dress parade, and seemed to be paying solemn attention to certain admonitions of the high sheriff.

That gentleman paused with upraised finger, and turned upon the intruders a very decided scowl.

"I want you to shake hands with a friend of mine, Aaron," cried Hiram, unabashed. "This is——"

"Let me 'tend to one thing at a time," advised Cap'n Sproul. He turned his back on the two latest arrivals. His upraised finger went on marking emphasis. "Now get up into the riggin' where I've told you to get. Spit on your hands and stand ready. You understand, she's goin' to sail close-hauled."

The men in rows began to stare at Mr. Belmore, open-mouthed and plainly embarrassed. They had promptly recognized him.

"Start in with the understandin' that they're all thieves," the sheriff went on, "and let 'em prove that they ain't pirates before you take your eyes off'n 'em."

"Look here, Aaron," broke in Hiram, fearing that he understood, "what's this parade, anyway, and what are you layin' out to do?"

"Standin' by to repel pirates," retorted the cap'n grimly. He pointed stubby finger at the flaring bills on boards across the street. "When I see the skull and crossbones run up at the peak, I propose to be ready."

"You don't mean to tell me you're talkin' about Belmore's circus in that fashion! Why, here——"

"I'm talkin' about it in just the way a circus ought to be talked about. Never knew of one that wasn't worse than a plague of bloodsuckers and gimlet birds. But when they try to bleed this place, a stinger or two will get dulled, don't forget that! You're biased about circuses. I ain't."

"Say, look here, mister," blurted Mr. Belmore, not waiting for the introduction that Hiram was agitatedly trying to perform, "you can go ahead and slur circuses in general; they can look out for themselves. But when you go to putting the hook into *my* circus, I've got something to say about it."

"I ain't takin' a reef in free speech," the sheriff retorted. "I'm 'tendin' to my own business."

"Now, gents," pleaded Hiram, "this ain't any way to start in bein' friends. I want you to get together different from this."

"If *he's* a friend of yours, keep him, don't divide him," advised Mr. Belmore, not mollified. "If you're picking this kind for chums, come down to the grounds to-morrow and meet my Bengal tiger. He's genial compared with this one."

He twitched down his white vest, returned the cap'n's baleful stare with interest, and stamped out of the office. The deputies followed at his heels. Their interview with the high sheriff seemed to be finished, and the sight of Mr. Belmore attracted them. It seemed as though the distinguished gentleman had stepped down in the flesh from his flaming posters.

"That's a devil of a way to handle a friend that I've brought around," stormed Hiram. "You couldn't have been sassier to a pickpocket."

"May be one, for all I know," returned the sheriff, looking at the spot where Mr. Belmore had been standing, and burning at memory of how that visitor had stared at him. "At any rate, he's the boss of a gang of them. He wouldn't be runnin' a circus if he wasn't."

"I used to run a circus. You don't mean that for a slur on me, do you?"

The cap'n was not dismayed by Hiram's heat.

"A man that has told me as many stories of circus skin games as you have, can't complain because I'm takin' a firm stand as sheriff of this county. I've got all my information about circuses from you. In case you was lyin' it's your own fault if I ain't grabbin' circus friends of yours and kissin' 'em on both cheeks; if you wasn't lyin', then, I'm doin' my duty by seein' that the folks of this county ain't robbed by them that will go away and brag about it. Take your pick! I've took mine!"

Hiram opened and closed his mouth several times, and then went away in pursuit of Mr. Belmore.

"I never knowed trouble to be comin' yet that I didn't have a forewarned sense of it—whether it was tornadoes or a fit of sickness," Cap'n Sproul muttered, gazing out of the window at the departing twain who strode away down the street. By the manner in which they shook their fists it was plain that they were not engaged in amiable dialogue. The sunlight flashed from their headgear. "If I ever saw sundogs warnin' a storm, it's them two plug hats."

Never was prescience more amply confirmed. When trouble arrived, Cap'n Sproul was sitting up waiting for it. He had told himself that he was keeping vigil in order to be on deck when the circus birds of prey lit in the Newry rigging at daybreak. But his seaman's sixth sense had hinted at something more ominous than the mere arrival of a circus in town.

Just when the first streaks of dawn were appearing, the telephone on the wall jangled long and loud alarm. It kept on ringing until he went to it, with one continuous "pr-r-ring!" It shrieked as plainly as a bell may.

When he took down the receiver, the nickel gongs goggled at him like eyes bulging with excitement. The man at the other end bellowed his news. The train bringing "Belmore Brothers' Leviathan Circus and Menagerie" had

been wrecked six miles outside of Newry. The informant was not coherent, but the gist of it, as the cap'n gathered the news, was that the circus had gone to smash.

"Ephalunts loose—tyenas, antilokes, chessy cats, and boy constructors ravin' and rollupin' wild over hill and down dale—thieves and pickpockets ravigin' and massacreein'—hell broke loose from the middle out'ards and we want protection!" screamed the man.

The sheriff held the receiver at arm's length from his battered eardrum.

"I'll be there!" he shouted in reply.

"Well, why ain't you here, where you ought to be, 'tendin' to your business in a time like this?" demanded the frenzied ruralist. "Lions, monkey-doodles, ossitriches, giroofs, and pipcats—all loose!"

Cap'n Sproul put his hand over his tortured ear and hung up the receiver.

"That man," he commented, grabbing his hat off its hook, "would have been a good deal of help to Noah, callin' off animiles when the old man was checkin' 'em off at the door of the ark."

He ran and roused the turnkey, who was sleeping on a cot in his cubbyhole.

"You round up that posse that I've been givin' off special orders to, and send 'em along after me," directed the sheriff. "Tell 'em to bring guns and a cannon or two, and be prepared to hunt big game."

Five minutes later Cap'n Sproul clattered into the village hotel and roused Hiram and Proprietor Belmore of the circus. The landlord pointed out to him the rooms those gentlemen occupied. The cap'n yelled the dire news through the transoms over the doors. "And you'd better come with me if you think you know how to handle animiles," he advised. "I'm havin' a span of hosses hitched into a wagon."

Mr. Belmore appeared first in the stable yard, where the sheriff was dancing about, admonishing a sleepy hostler. Mr. Belmore was in a state of mind bordering closely on frenzy.



*At sight of every man with a gun, Proprietor Belmore roared protestations.*

"What did you and your jayhawk band do—pull up the rails ahead of that train, or put something on the track?" he inquired savagely. "A man like you is capable of doin' either trick!"

"If I'd had a hand in it I'd have wrecked it farther off, and mebbe I *would* if I had thought of it in time. I wouldn't be turnin' your Fijis and howlin' wild beasts loose within five miles of this place, if I'd had *my* way."

He climbed up beside the driver. Hiram Look came running, finishing dressing as he ran. He clamored for more news.

"You've got it as I got it—and that's all I know," stated the sheriff. "Now, you two on the back seat will oblige me consid'able if you'll man your own talk tackle and let me alone. I ain't

safe to be talked to—not in the way I've been talked to."

He turned and looked Mr. Belmore in the eye, and settled himself for their headlong ride to the scene of the accident. The situation did not inspire conversation.

They arrived speedily in the outer edge of the trouble zone. It was apparent that the zone was rapidly expanding. News of the disaster had spread on the wings of the wind, and the country-folk were taking measures accordingly.

Men were perched on roofs of sheds and barns with rifles across their knees. Doors and blinds were closed, and they got glimpses of women peering from upper windows.

At sight of every man with a gun, Proprietor Belmore roared protestations.

"They're harmless as kittens—all the animals! Don't shoot! Catch 'em alive. Don't shoot! Get the rewards, gents, get the rewards!"

The men on the roofs stared after the rushing wagon without reply. They did not display any anxiety to earn rewards. No one moved. They simply clinched their guns more firmly.

"They'll shoot everything that heaves in sight, the infernal silo wall-lopers!" mourned Mr. Belmore. "Come down and get busy and earn good money, people. Catch 'em alive! They won't hurt you."

"Not if you catch 'em this way," yelled a man who was straddling one of the lower branches of a tree. He had a gun in one hand and was shaking something limp and furry at them with the other hand.

"Hold up!" commanded Mr. Belmore, and the driver pulled his horses to a standstill. The man in the tree had a dead monkey.

"Ain't any need of goin' to Afriky,"



he stated cheerfully. "I'm settin' here and lettin' Afriky come to me."

"You've gone to work and shot Lorenzo, the Lightnin' Monkey Calculator—murdered a five-hundred-dollar side-show attraction that ain't got an equal in the country—you—you——" Mr. Belmore couldn't find the word he wanted. His voice quavered.

"Well, Lorenz—if that's his name—won't lightnin' calkilate no more to no great extent," suggested the man, without showing remorse. "And if you're his owner, you can claim the remains by calculatin' how much them eleven hens are worth that he wrung the necks of before I got him."

In the doleful silence that followed they heard guns barking in the distance. The man in the tree giggled in his excitement.

"Sounds as if we'd get pelts and stuffed heads enough to decorate all the settin' rooms in town. Rosyvelt ain't havin' no better fun than this."

"Here you are, high sheriff of this county!" raged Mr. Belmore, reaching forward and clutching Cap'n Sproul's shoulder. "I call on you to protect my property."

"The high sheriff, hey!" cried the man aloft. "Well, he ain't gettin' onto the spot any too soon. I'm knowin' to it he's been telefoamed to and asked to protect *our* property."

"What are you goin' to do about savin' my animals from this mob of jeehootin' idiots?" demanded Belmore. More gun shots in the distance had roused him. "I'll sue you and this town and county and every taxpayer in it, if I ain't protected."

"I've got a posse comin'," stated the sheriff, pulling away from the circus man's grasp, "and there ain't much doubt about there bein' some good shots in it. If them animiles of yours are as tame as you say they be, I'd advise you to get out here on some handy hill and whistle to 'em. They'd best be in the coop."

"That's the right kind of talk," observed the farmer in the tree. "That's what we're electin' sheriffs for in this county."

"Lick along!" directed Cap'n Sproul, nudging the driver. "I want to get into the middle of this hoorah."

"You ought to be proud of this section of the country where you've located, Hiram," exploded Belmore, after he had blasted the way for speech with a mighty oath. "You ought to be standin' up and givin' three cheers for the friends and associates you've got here."

"Aaron, it ain't usin' me right—it ain't usin' my friend right—it ain't a square deal between friends," exclaimed the gentleman who had been apostrophized.

"If you're advisin' me, as an officer, to let wild animiles rampage through this town, eatin' whom they may devour, you're lettin' the circus business warp your judgment."

"They ain't wild animals. They're show animals. They're harmless, I tell you," bleated Belmore.

At that moment the horses that drew their wagon snorted, balked, crouched with bellies almost touching the roadway, and then dashed across the ditch. One forward wheel struck a rock and was dished. A stone wall stopped the wagon with a jolt. The horses tore away from harness and buckles, and leaped the wall. They galloped away, screaming in their fright. The four men went sprawling headlong upon the turf. Cap'n Sproul was first on his feet. On a hillock at a little distance a tiger crouched, tearing at the bloody carcass of a lamb. The sheriff armed himself by grabbing a rock in each hand.

"Say, 'Kitty, kitty' to *that* thing," he vociferated, turning on Belmore, who was staring at the spectacle, remaining on his hands and knees as he had fallen. "If that's one of your pets, call it up and put it in your pocket!"

"It's Lenore," moaned the circus man, crawling to his silk hat. He scrubbed his elbow around the nap, from force of habit, sitting on the grass and gazing at the beast on the hillock. The tiger spied them, rose, and setting her fore paws on the carcass vented a demoniacal howl.

Cap'n Sproul led the retreat. He leaped over the wall and ran down the hill across the pasture. A stretch of woodland promised shelter. The others followed. Even Belmore ran as hard as any of them. The voice of the tiger and her bloody muzzle were not reassuring.

The descent led them through the woods and to the railroad. They broke out of the covert full upon the scene of devastation. Splintered cars lay at the foot of an embankment. Other cars were on the track. Some of these had rolled upon their sides and had burst open. A few dead horses were scattered about, but for the most part everything in sight on legs was very much alive. The men and women of the show were thronging in the woods that bordered the railway. A band of Indians had kindled a bonfire and were stolidly cooking breakfast. Foragers were already coming in from raids. Their arms were heaped with all kinds of eatables, gathered at random. Fresh-killed pullets and hats heaped with eggs made up the principal part of the plunder.

Belmore raged in among them. But his dreadful imprecations had little effect. It was plain that utter demoralization reigned. His force had become rebels. A burly man who was plucking handfuls of feather from a fowl scowled up into Belmore's face when the proprietor stood over him and shook fists in his face.

"That's a nice job for the head canvasser of this show to be about when a hundred thousand dollars' worth of horses and menagerie animals are loose, you beef-faced son of a sirloin, you!"

"What did you expect I'd be doin' while waitin' for that wreckin' train? Holdin' a prayer meeting' or singin' 'We're here because we're here?'"

"Expect, you liver-souled tent peg! Why ain't you out roundin' up my animals?"

The big man spat a feather out of his mouth with venom. He brandished the denuded bird at his master.

"Let me tell you that I was out

tryin' to round up your mangy bunch and I was shot at four times and hit with a rock twice, and the rest of the boys was used the same way. And if you want your menagerie while them jays has got ammunition left, go and get it. So says I!"

"And so says the rest of us!" was the chorus.

Mr. Belmore understood the nature of his rebels. He turned from them to the sheriff, who was leaning against a tree getting his breath.

"You heard that!" he bellowed. "Your farmers shootin' my men and killin' my animals. What have you got to say about it? I want to know that! What have you got to say?"

Cap'n Sproul gulped hard and recovered his voice.

"I want to say that close time on tigers is declared off in this county for one thing—and close time on circus pirates ain't on yet."

"And you dare to stand there and tell me that I don't get any protection?"

"I reckon the hen roosts are what need protectin'," said the cap'n, pointing to the array of dressed poultry.

"And that's the idee of the taxpayers that elected you," shouted a voice at the cap'n's elbow.

New parties to the colloquy had arrived. Some twenty men armed with guns, scythes, and pitchforks were there, their approach unnoticed in the heat of the quarrel.

"You was seen runnin' down this way, and some thought you had come to join the circus, sheriff," the spokesman sneered. "We didn't know but your friend, Mister Look, was still managin' you—as he says he is. He's pretty much circus."

"And I'm pretty much sheriff of this county," stormed the cap'n. He glared defiance at all of them.

"Then you'd better arrest these thieves that have robbed our hen pens and pulled up our garden sass," advised the spokesman of the newly arrived farmers. "And after that you can tackle the menagerie that's whoopin' around over this town, spreadin' terror."



*The horses tore away from harness and buckles, and leaped the wall.*

"Hey, rube!" yelled Mr. Belmore, sounding the war cry of the circus. "Get at 'em, boys! We've got to save our property."

But his men sulked.

"It ain't no use, boss," said the big canvasman. "The show has been put on the biff, and it's your own fault. You've been told that your cars was punk. You've been warned this would happen. One of 'em caved in and the

rest of 'em rolled over it and busted open like rotten punkins. And if you think we're hired to get out and hur-roosh elephants and tigers with every farmer in town pumpin' buckshot into us, you've got another thought comin'. Fix the farmers, and let us eat breakfast, and we may be able to arrange a deal. But just now it's us for the drumsticks!"

"Well, I thought I knew something

about circus men," exploded Hiram, "but I reckon I don't, not the kind they're raisin' nowadays. It looks to me, Bel, as though you've been sold out. Mebbe the big syndicate has been doin' business here."

Mr. Belmore clawed at his mustaches distractedly. He looked away from human faces, at trees, sky, and the sun, rolling up from the horizon; he seemed to be trying to assure himself that he was still on earth.

"I don't know who it is that's been doin' business, whether it's the devil, an earthquake, or a dynamite bomb," he groaned, "but whatever it is, it's been done good and proper." He turned his back on his demoralized and recreant following. He appealed to the embattled farmers. "Boys, I want them animals caught."

"Donno about that," explained the spokesman stubbornly. "We're here to sort of get the authority of the court, as you might say, from the sheriff, to kill off the pizen critters. We don't propose to have no jungle made of this town."

"I summons ye all as a posse," cried the sheriff. Circus men had been arriving, loaded with spoils. "I arrest this whole gang."

"Aw, you're a joke!" sneered the big canvasman, throwing feathers at the infuriated cap'n; the feathers covered his hat and stuck in his beard. "Go home and currycomb your whiskers and have a good time!"

"Arrest 'em!" exhorted Cap'n Sproul.

"Hey, rube!" yelled the canvasman, and at his clarion call fifty men formed determined front. "Try to arrest, and you'll have to set the fence over to take in more village graveyard."

The countrymen backed away. Stories of circus prowess in fights had long been legends among them.

"I'm offerin' big rewards for those animals," said Mr. Belmore, going among them and pleading. "You'll get your money. Here's my friend, Hiram Look. He'll vouch for me. You know him. The animals won't hurt you. Handle 'em easy and don't scare 'em. That's all."

Cap'n Sproul was not deterred by the front presented by the circus men.

"Come along!" shouted the sheriff, summoning them with waving arms. The canvasman reached out, shook him, tripped him, and sat on him, proceeding to divest the chicken of the remainder of its feathers.

"We're always ready to earn an honest dollar," stated one of the farmers. They took awkward pains to disregard the sheriff's appeals for rescue. "All we want is to be showed how."

"I'll show you," Hiram volunteered. "You follow me."

They trooped away at his heels. When they were out of sight the canvasman got up off his struggling captive. Though nearly blind with rage, the cap'n beheld a sight that gladdened him. His specially trained, personally mobilized posse was arriving. They were armed. But when he danced about them, shrieking commands to rush in and arrest, they surveyed him with frank astonishment.

"I hope you haven't come here lookin' for trouble, men," said Belmore. "You'll get plenty of it, if it's what you're after. But if you want to earn honest money, help round up my animals."

"We come acrost some kind of a critter, and brought him," said one of the men. The group parted and disclosed the capture.

"The tapir!" cried Belmore joyfully.

"Taper, eh?" They looked at the beast with renewed interest. "He came along sooave enough. You're welcome to him, whatever he is."

Belmore pulled out a roll of bills that made their eyes bulge.

"Here's twenty-five dollars, boys. Divide it. That's for the tapir. Bring in the rest and be paid accordingly. Make hay while the sun shines. Get out and get busy."

It was instantly plain that the posse had been won. And Cap'n Sproul, seeing it, came at them, raving. But they gazed past him at the roll of bills that Belmore waved above his head. "It's here waitin' for you," he urged.

"Business is business," replied the

chief deputy sententiously. He led away his force.

"Now, if you've got to be attended to, you'll be attended to," gritted Belmore.

Cap'n Sproul had been employing language and gestures that were not to be disregarded. The showman dove at the sheriff, right hand outspread, palm outward. He caught the cap'n's chin with a stiff arm thrust, ran him backward, and tossed him over a hummock. It was the famous "circus hand." The sheriff jarred down hard and sat on the ground.

"Now, blast ye, meditate!" advised Belmore fiercely. And after standing over his antagonist a little while, he went away to express certain sentiments to his rebellious crew.

Cap'n Sproul did sit and meditate. There did not appear to be anything else for him to do just then. The savor of roasting fowl and sweet corn was wafted to him from the bonfires. The circus people seemed to be enjoying themselves in spite of the remarks that Belmore addressed to them as he strode about.

Through the slats of the cars that had not been smashed queer animals thrust snouts, and unheard-of howls, yelps, and growls sped upon the morning breeze across the fields of Newry. Angry as he was, the thought occurred to Cap'n Sproul that sudden catastrophes turn human nature topsy-turvy. Here was a neighborhood in rural New England as guiltless of law and order at that moment as an African jungle, and, as far as human vision went, resembling some district of the remote Congo.

Two of the deputies came rushing down through the woods, tugging along by its curved horns some singular animal that the cap'n had never dreamed of before in his wildest imaginings. The men received their reward from the ready roll of Mr. Belmore, and rushed away on the hunt once more. Then several farmers came shooing a real nightmare of a beast into camp. They passed near where Cap'n Sproul sat in wrathful gloom.

"I'd like to know what in thunder this thing is," panted one of the excited herders.

"What difference does it make what he is, so long as we get the ree-ward?" inquired his helper. He threw a club to head the creature off. "This ain't no time to stop and ask questions. Get the money and hump ourselves after another critter."

They did not even look at the high sheriff. Authority had gone to the bottom in that tip-up of events. The cap'n reflected on it, and his bitterness grew more acrid. On the other hand, while his own authority remained in abeyance, he noticed that Belmore's was beginning to take form once more. A wrecking train had arrived. Order was growing from chaos. Men who had breakfasted on chicken and fixings were in a different mood, and from mutineers became willing workers, back on the old job.

Cap'n Sproul did not enjoy the sight. He arose and went away, and no one gave him a glance. In traversing the pasture woods he stood aside several times to let parties pass who were conveying a fresh capture. Even an elephant went along docilely with two tines of a pitchfork thrust in a huge ear. It was evident that propinquity and intimate association and the thoughts of the circus roll of money were robbing the beasts of the jungle of their terrors.

"I've been through a good many perils, by land and sea, and have had some setbacks in my time," pondered the discredited cap'n, "but if ever my nose got rubbed in the grit good and thorough, this is the time. I'm a-goin' home."

Trudging moodily, head down, hands behind his back, thinking baleful thoughts, and nourishing wicked hopes of what might happen to his constituents, provided some of those beasts should eventually resent their slambang manner of capture, Cap'n Sproul did not take especial heed of the course his footsteps pursued.

"Now, for instance," he reflected, "providing that tiger, feeling hearty



"We was waitin' to trap ye! Ye're goners! Ste' bite 'em, Lenore!"

and healthy after her lamb breakfast, should decide that a neighborhood where fresh lambs ran at large, waiting for hungry tigers, would be a fine section for a summer vacation in the open, and should——"

There was the deep rumble of a growl in front of him. He stopped like one stricken, and slowly raised his gaze from the ground where it had been gloomily fixed. It was Lenore! Even in that moment of horror, he remembered the name that the circus man had applied to her. His eyes met hers, and she growled again.

She ran a tongue, so red that it seemed fairly to flame, over her lips and blood-stained muzzle.

Cap'n licked his own lips. They were dry with sudden terror. The great cat was barely a rod away. The torn lamb lay under her. Having eat-

en her fill, she had been rolling upon it in ecstasy of repletion.

"Lenore!" It was desperation that nerved him to speak her name. Dimly in his whirling thoughts, he was remembering that Belmore told him the animals were tame. Therefore, she ought to know her name. The cap'n had found on past occasions that familiarity with a dog's name worked wonders in placating. The tiger pricked her ears and gave her tail a lazy swish. It really seemed that her staring yellow eyes softened a bit at the sound of the word. Cap'n Sproul was heartened somewhat. He tried it again.

"Lenore!" She whined. "Lenore, the feller that owns you was just askin' about you." In his panic he found himself talking to the beast as though she could understand. But in desperate crises one grasps at straws. "He's down yonder, you know, where you come from."

He directed a trembling thumb over his shoulder. She came up, bracing herself on her fore feet, and growled ominously.

"I didn't mean nothin'," he stammered; "I was only pointin' the way." And, then, realizing into what utter folly his fear had been driving him, he muttered disgustedly: "Listen to me, holding human conversation with that devilish cat with a barber-pole tail, just as though she could understand me! I'll be cussed if I ain't lost what little mind I ever had." She pricked her ears again at the murmur of his voice and whined.

For a long time the two gazed at each other. Then the sound of a voice startled both. The tiger looked in the direction from which it had come, and so did Cap'n Sproul. A bunch of his recreant deputies stood on a neighboring hillock surveying the "living statu-ary" with interest.



"I reckon you two will know each other next time you meet," observed one of the men jocosely. Armed, and at a safe distance, he could afford to be jocose.

Cap'n Sproul nerved himself. At the risk of his shout bringing the huge beast upon him, he yelled frantically: "Shoot her! All together, now, shoot!"

But not a man lifted gun. The tiger bristled her back and lashed her tail, after venting a hoarse cry.

"Well, I guess not!" called a man. "She's the prize critter of the whole show. There's a hundred and fifty ready and waitin' for us when she's brought in."

For a blank moment the sheriff's mind swam in a stupor of amazement. Then mighty wrath swept through him. For an example of fiendish calculation, this indifference to his fate was without parallel.

"What be ye, usin' me for bait?" he yelled. "Goin' to let her stuff herself on me, and then catch her asleep? You infernal, devilish gazoooks!"

"Well, we ain't goin' to shoot no hundred and fifty into rags and ribbons," returned the stubborn deputy. "It ain't business!"

Cap'n Sproul groaned, and the tiger growled.

"Well, shoot *me*, then! Get me over the agony!"

"We are goin' to close in gradual, sheriff. She'll probably give in, but if she don't—" The man did not complete his prediction. The lapse was ominous.

"If you go to stirrin' her up," the cap'n shrieked, "she'll fall to and eat me surer'n jibbooms don't grow sprouts. She's all fussed up now. Can't you see she is?" He stepped back a pace and the tiger followed. "She's gettin' ready to chaw, I tell ye! Keep off and let us alone!"

"Don't you want to be rescued?" inquired the chief of the noble little band. "We ain't goin' away and leave you. Nor we ain't goin' to destroy good circus property, either," he added, when the frantic cap'n further besought them to shoot.

The men spread out and advanced cautiously. The animal began to twitch her tail more vigorously. She cast glances from side to side, apprehending what their movements signified. Her demeanor decame that of the savage animal at bay.

Cap'n Sproul was far from being an expert on tigers, but he realized the danger that was now provoked by the fools who were proposing to capture the beast. He understood the temper of an animal at bay. He was the nearest victim. His flesh began to crawl. But his awful fear suddenly departed from him. Berserker rage took possession. He was at bay himself. The men closing in on him to the jeopardy of his life were too far away for his vengeance to reach them.

"Lenore!" he roared, and ran at her. His intention was to attempt to kick her skull in with his heavy boots—an insane plan, but warranted by a crazy situation.

In his agitation he was half blind, but he saw something that amazed him as he bore down on her. She laid back her ears, rolled upon her side, whined, and writhed toward him—full-fed beast, beholding enemies approaching and seeking the protection of this master who had shouted her name. Her brief freedom had not given her the courage that all her years of captivity had stolen from her.

The old seaman's quick instinct realized. He clutched the ring in her collar and dragged her up. She fawned against him.

"Lenore," he yelled, "ste' bite 'em!" He started toward the men, hauling her. They began to run in a bunch, herding for safety.

The spirit of the chase took possession of the tiger. The master whose hand grasped her collar gave her courage.

"I'll have her eat every one of you," panted the cap'n. "It's all understood between us. We was waitin' to trap ye! Ye're goners. Ste' bite 'em, Lenore!"

A fugitive fell down, his gun flying far. His fall knocked the breath out

of him, and the cap'n and his tiger were upon him before he could get up. In his excitement and fury, Cap'n Sproul had lost all sense of conduct. He was fairly out of his wits. He jammed the animal's head down upon the shrieking man. "Take a hunk out of him!" he yelled, bloodthirsty as a savage. When she tried to avoid the man, the cap'n straddled her neck and bounced her muzzle upon the victim. She pulled away, hurt and thoroughly frightened.

"You ding-basted tabby cat, you, ain't you fit to eat nothin' but liver!" She crowded to him, and even yawned listlessly.

He stood and looked at her a little while, a strange, grim, half-humorous expression of disgust slowly replacing the fury on his contorted features.

The man at his feet lay groaning in adject terror, shielding his head with his arms. The cap'n kicked him, and he got up and ran. The others had disappeared. When he turned to look at the tiger, she was placidly rubbing a huge paw over her poll, slicking her fur, cat fashion.

"You come along with me, Lenore," he said, after a reflective survey of her. "You must be needin' to make up some sleep."

Belmore was not gracious when Cap'n Sproul led Lenore up to him. But he pulled out his roll of bills and licked his thumb, with a look on his face that might indicate that the thumb was sour. "Put it back," advised the sheriff of Cuxabexis.

"I ain't askin' any favors from you," said the proprietor. "I'm here to pay all bills and all rewards."

"There ain't any charge, and where there ain't any charge there can't be payment," stated the cap'n, with decision. "But if you feel under any obligation to me, let me use that obligation to talk a little business with you without fightin' and without bein' sassed."

"You started all the trouble yourself in the first place," declared Belmore resentfully.

"Owin' to my general opinion of cir-

cuses—an opinion that ain't been changed. But I ain't here now to go into any argument about that. There ain't any need of it. You won't be givin' any show in Newry to-day—"

"Nor never!"

"Glad of it. Pass along your way and be happy. So now we can talk business."

"Talk it, and talk quick, because I've got a crew to look after."

"Is this the savagest critter you've got in your show?" He patted the tiger's head.

"I ain't got any savage critters. I've told you so right along."

"Excuse me for puttin' the question—but I never knew a circus man to tell the truth yet. Now, you ain't got tucked away in them cars that ain't busted something that's savage—something that has a special fancy for human critters—something that'd rather gnaw a man's leg than lap down the fanciest dish ever got together. You're under obligations to me for bringin' in this overgrown mouser, and I'd like a plain, direct, and truthful answer."

"No, sir, I haven't!" There was sincerity in Mr. Belmore's reply that was convincing. "There's a couple of hyenas that wouldn't dare to chase a cat up a tree. There's a lion that has to have his meat chewed for him so's he can gum it. And you've seen what this tiger is."

"I've seen," said Cap'n Sproul regretfully. "And I never was so disappointed in a little thing in all my life. Now, is there anything you can say to Lenore, here, or anything you can do to her to make her want to eat up about half a dozen men? If there is, I'll pay your price for her, and add five hundred dollars on, as a bonus. That's business talk, and I'll have the money here inside of an hour."

"I'm goin' to be honest with you—seein' that circumstances is as they is. I raised this tiger from a cub. She was born in a cage. There ain't any more spirit in her than there is in a coon kitten."

"Then, that's all," said the cap'n gloomily. "I'll bid you good day."

Mr. Belmore followed him a few paces.

"Say, look-a-here, I'm sort of curious to know what you are driving at."

"Well, I'll tell you!" vouchsafed Cap'n Sproul. "I was goin' to commit a line of wholesale murder for good and sufficient reasons, and I wanted to lay the cuss of it off onto a dumb animal. And I could have arranged it, if your whole show hadn't been a fake, like every circus is, and like I've always insisted about circuses. They

hadn't ought to be allowed runnin' around the country. And so that's all, and good day, again!"

He went off through the pasture trees, his head bowed in thought, his hands behind his back.

"If any one had told me twenty-four hours ago," he muttered, "that I would see the time I'd be willin' to pay five thousand dollars spot cash for a real man-eatin' tiger I wouldn't have believed it. That shows how uncertain this life is. I'll go home now."



### Song

IF I were a bird I would fly to you,  
If I were a wind I would sigh to you,  
If I—near the place where you passed—were a flower,  
I'd unfold my petals and bloom at the hour  
When my fragrance might fill the air nigh to you;  
Thus to breathe out my heart and to die—to you.

If I were a star I would glow for you,  
One steadfast small gleam still to show for you;  
And I know that the glance of your beautiful eyes  
Would know me from all other stars in the skies.  
With the wandering moon sinking low for you,  
I would burn all the brighter and glow for you.

If I were a minstrel I'd sing to you,  
My glad harp with raptures would ring to you.  
If you were a beggar and I were a king,  
My majesty all at your feet I would fling—  
Queen's silks and queen's purples would cling to you  
My kingdom its treasures would bring to you.

Oh, love, take the love that now flows to you!  
Oh, sweet, hear the song that now goes to you;  
And if it could only but tell you a part  
Of the loving and longing that throbs with my heart—  
Some small part of my loving disclose to you—  
This dull world would bloom like a rose to you.

CARL HEINRICH.

# The Henrietta

By Arthur Dudley Hall

*[Founded upon Bronson Howard's celebrated play, first produced by Robson and Crane, and now being performed with great success by Joseph and William Jefferson. By permission of Mrs. Bronson Howard.]*

## CHAPTER I.

THERE was a frown upon Nicholas Vanalstyne's face—Old Nick, as he was known in the Street, partially to distinguish him from his son, Nicholas Vanalstyne, Junior, and partially from a real, or fancied, resemblance to a certain famous personage bearing the same sobriquet. He glanced over a sheaf of papers, which his confidential clerk, Musgrave, had just handed to him. "Forty-eight millions already out as collaterals; balance available, only twenty-eight millions," he growled, and the bushy eyebrows lowered over his deep-set, steely gray eyes.

Vanalstyne wheeled about in his chair from the desk at which he was seated, and faced his elder son, who had his ear glued to a telephone, at the other end of the room. The two men were in the library of the magnificent Vanalstyne mansion on Fifth Avenue, a handsome apartment in rich but subdued colors, which also served on occasions for a private office.

"My son," began the distinguished financier, and young Nicholas put up the telephone, and turned to his father a face in which there was a trace of anxiety.

It was rather a handsome face, but unnaturally pale, and the eyes were somewhat sunken—the face of a man who was living constantly under high pressure. Indeed, the family physician, young Doctor Parke Wainwright, had already warned him that his attention to business, which, by the way, was a great source of pride to his father, was slowly but surely undermining his health.

"I think you attribute my trouble to the wrong source, doctor," young Vanalstyne had protested. "Look at my father, for instance; he is the largest operator in the Street, but he is always in perfect health."

"Your father was bred in the country," retorted Wainwright. "His nerves were as firm, and as cold, as steel before he ever came to the city. These leviathans of the money market all come from quieter scenes of labor in their youth. Wall Street has never yet bred its own giants. But sons of those men are mere bundles of nerves that burn themselves out like the over-charged wires of a battery."

The doctor's words had made considerable impression upon young Nick at the time, but he was not thinking of them now, as he advanced obediently to his father's summons.

The elder Vanalstyne was evidently perplexed. "My son," he went on, after repeating the figures before him, "some other big fish is swimming in these waters, and there aren't any signs of where he is yet. Some great operator is going against us in this Henrietta mine deal. I have felt his hand at every move in the game, but I can't see him. He's working in the dark. Whoever it is, we've got to move very carefully; my balance to work on is very narrow. I got this infernal Henrietta mine on a three-hundred-dollar bluff, in a friendly game of poker. I incorporated the game—I mean the mine—for twenty millions capital; bought the whole town, including the newspapers and an opera house, and all the railways running in that direction, not to mention the branch lines,

and a steamship company, nor to say anything of six million acres of public land grants. The Henrietta Railway and Mining Company now pervades and ramifies the entire country—from Ohio to California. It has become the financial focus of the solar system."

Much of this was a twice-told tale to young Nick; but, nevertheless, he listened with every appearance of respectful attention. This was invariably his attitude toward his father, although he was far from always agreeing with him. For one thing, the old gentleman, when he had a deal on, would pursue the matter to the bitter end, riding rough shod over all who stood as obstacles in his path. So far, so good; this coincided with young Nick's ideas. But when the victory was won, his father had a deplorable fashion of hunting up his victims, and putting them on their financial feet once more. This the son regarded as a pitiable sign of weakness, although he was far too clever to give voice to this opinion.

Old Nick gathered up the papers, and still with that puzzled frown upon his face, feeling that he had an enemy in the dark, whom he could not as yet put his finger upon, left the room. Young Nick turned again to the telephone, and in a low tone began a more or less animated conversation with his brokers, a conversation, which, could his father have overheard, would have caused that worthy gentleman a decided shock, to say the least.

Scarcely was the conversation finished, when a servant entered, and announced Doctor Wainwright.

Young Nick turned to receive his visitor with some impatience. "More warnings, I suppose," he exclaimed. "I shall take the rest I need, as soon as I can find time."

Parke Wainwright looked at him with a peculiar expression on his handsome, open countenance, and then, without waiting for an invitation, seated himself at the desk, and replied gravely:

"You'll find plenty of time for rest—in the grave, if you wait. But I have another matter to talk about this morn-

ing; one that pertains neither to your health nor to my own profession—except in an accidental way." He paused a moment, and then went on determinedly: "I was called to the bedside of a very sick woman last night. She was in a high fever and delirious. This morning she became conscious, though still very weak."

Young Vanalstyne started, and, if possible, turned a shade paler, but his voice was even enough as he replied:

"Gertrude Reynolds! Well?"

"What I heard during her delirium, and what she said to me afterward, is a professional confidence, and yet—I—I—" The doctor faltered. He felt that he was on delicate ground.

"I will relieve your embarrassment," put in Vanalstyne coldly, looking at Wainwright with fishy, apparently unconcerned eyes. "Gertrude Reynolds has discovered my real name, and the fact that I am a married man; she has letters in my handwriting, and she threatens to send those letters to my wife."

"You have heard from her yourself!" exclaimed the doctor, and then he went on very seriously, very earnestly, stifling the feeling of repulsion which his companion invariably aroused in him: "All I intended, all I could have done, was to put you on your guard. I have nothing whatever to do with your relations with this woman. That, of course, is your own affair—and hers. But your wife loves you, Vanalstyne, with her whole heart." There was a little break in his voice as he said this, but he continued resolutely: "I know how deeply she loves you. Gertrude Reynolds is bitter, beyond all reason and control. I can hardly blame her, for she is herself a mother. But what she threatens to do would be a crime against a sincere and devoted woman. If anything can be done to protect your wife from the ruin of her domestic happiness, I shall assist you to the best of my ability."

Vanalstyne bowed his acknowledgments.

"Thank you, doctor. We will see what can be done."

The persistent telephone rang again, and after a brief conference, monosyllabic on his part, Vanalstyne excused himself, and evidently in response to an imperative summons, hurried away. Once more business had him in its grip. He had been warned, but to know the danger does not prevent men from rushing into its midst. Precipices have a certain ghastly attraction.

Doctor Wainwright sighed as he looked after him, but the sigh was not for the young man himself, or for his possible fate.

He took up his hat to depart, and was detained by a drawing, though not unpleasant, "Morning, doctor."

He turned to face the third, and youngest, member of the Vanalstyne family. No brothers could have been more different in appearance, or in character, than the two sons of Old Nick. Bertie Vanalstyne was not an Adonis for beauty, or an Admirable Crichton for learning—far from it. He was very fair, with blue eyes, light curly hair—close-cropped and parted in the middle—and a smooth, pink-cheeked, boyish face. His manner was simple, almost to a ridiculous point, but he was not exactly a fool; he was only ingenuous, and remarkably free from guile.

His father's opinion of him was a very poor one, indeed, it must be confessed. The contrast between him and his brother was too great. But most people, while openly laughing at him, liked Bertie; and Parke Wainwright was no exception to the rule, so it was a cordial greeting that the young man's salutation received. "Out late last night?" asked the doctor, after Bertie had informed him that he had just finished breakfast, although it was now long past midday.

"Club—three o'clock," Bertie informed him briefly. "Drank Apollinaris. Smoked two whole cigarettes."

"You're a wild young man," laughed Wainwright.

Bertie smiled widely, as though highly pleased with the appellation. "All of us fellows at the club are wild young

dogs," he acknowledged, in his peculiar, soft drawl.

"Let me feel your pulse," suiting the action to the word.

"Is it beating too fast?"

"I haven't discovered it yet. You will never die of too much excitement, Bertie."

"I was afraid I might," said Bertie, with a simplicity which Wainwright could not quite tell was real or affected. "We fellows at the club lead such a fast life."

"This chair has a quicker pulse than yours," smiled Wainwright, placing his hand on the chair which young Nick had recently vacated. "Your case puzzles me. I really don't see how you're going to die at all. You will never have energy enough to die a *natural* death. You'll find it very embarrassing, one of these days. As to dying of love——" He broke off an instant, glancing curiously at Bertie, whose wrist he still held. "Good heavens! I felt a beat then! Two beats! Another! Bertie——" he dropped the wrist and shook his finger slowly at the other—"you're in love."

"You doctors are wonderful men," gasped Bertie, his face suddenly crimson. "I *am* in love. I'm in love with Agnes."

A quick, joyous sigh startled both, at this declaration. They turned in its direction, and saw, standing in the doorway, as radiant a vision of sweet, fresh young girlhood as man's eyes were ever blessed with.

Agnes Austin was just beyond her eighteenth birthday, and was certainly a "queen rose in the rosebud garden of girls." Her slender, graceful figure was exquisitely proportioned. Her hair, which was very simply arranged, was of a rich, warm brown, her eyes were of a deeper tawny color, and her beautifully shaped mouth parted to reveal two rows of pearly teeth. And just now, with a heightened flush on her cheeks, and a singularly brilliant light in her eyes, she was doubly entrancing.

Bertie caught his breath, and, over-



whelmed at the thought of his evidently overheard confession, turned away and leaned weakly against the mantelpiece.

Parke Wainwright glanced from one to the other, with an amused, though sympathetic, look upon his face.

"I think I'd better leave you together," he volunteered.

"Thank you," murmured Agnes demurely.

After the doctor had gone, there was silence, and then Agnes, entering the room, with a curious inflection, pronounced the other's name.

"Bertie!"

"Agnes!" he replied mechanically, turning to face her.

"I—you—I——" she faltered. "Haven't you anything to say to me, Bertie?"

"I've said it," he replied, half dejected, half hopeful.

"You told Doctor Wainwright that—that you loved me," said Agnes, with an adorable blush.

At this he caught her hand and held it awkwardly in his. "I've been trying to say that to you, instead of the doctor, for the last six weeks," he declared staunchly, and yet not quite losing the drawl which had become habitual to him.

Agnes' answer must have been quite satisfactory, for— But why tell it? Are the love scenes of very young people ever interesting to any one except the very young people themselves?

After the first effusions, Agnes began to sound her lover, as many a young girl has done before.

"Bertie," she began, "I hear you're a very wicked young man."

Bertie could not help pluming himself. This was delightful.

"That's what we fellows in the club like all the ladies to say about us."

"But you—you mustn't be wicked, for my sake."

Bertie hesitated a moment, and then he magnanimously resolved to tell the truth, no matter what it might cost him to do so.

"I am not wicked a bit, Agnes," he confessed shamefacedly. "I will con-

ceal nothing from you. I am as innocent as a lamb."

"My darling!" cried Agnes fervently. "I love you all the more for it!"

Bertie looked at her in a dazed way, as if he did not quite understand.

"Thank you," he said blankly. "I was afraid you wouldn't; but I didn't want to deceive you."

Suddenly Agnes' face changed. She had remembered something which needed an explanation.

"Bertie," she said, a little severely, "I looked into your room the other day, when you were downtown, and there was a whole row of pictures on your mantelpiece—pictures of actresses and—dancers, Bertie, dear. And there was one picture there—I didn't like her face at all—and it had her name on it, in a lady's handwriting—Henrietta."

"Oh, yes," said Bertie blandly, and with rather a vacuous smile. "Henrietta is the most famous dancer in New York. All of us fellows at the club have her picture."

"Have you ever seen Henrietta off the stage?" she demanded, growing a trifle alarmed.

"Often," he acknowledged cheerfully, even somewhat proudly. "Nearly every night about eleven o'clock half a dozen of us fellows walk out of the club one by one, and we meet at the stage door of the theatre. We stand there, in a row, till Henrietta passes out, and gets into her carriage. Then we all go back to the club and sit there."

Agnes smiled happily. It wasn't so bad, after all. But still she was not quite satisfied.

"Bertie," she said softly, laying her hand persuasively upon his arm, "I want you to send away all those pictures in your room—Henrietta's particularly."

The surrender was prompt and unequivocal. "I'll burn 'em all," he proclaimed virtuously, "particularly Henrietta's."

And, then, for the first time, to his mingled delight and confusion, Agnes kissed him.

Half an hour later, Nicholas Van-

alstyne, Senior, returning to the library, found them still there.

Old Nick greeted Agnes with a show of affection which was thoroughly genuine. From the moment that Agnes Austin, the younger sister of young Nick's wife, Rose, had come to share her sister's home, the girl had wound herself about his heart.

His treatment of his son this morning, however, was very different. To the latter's timid, "John said you wanted to see me, sir," he responded with a gruff: "Yes, I do." And then suddenly, to Agnes' dismay:

"I have struggled with you in vain, young man, and I am tired. You are a hopeless idiot."

"I cannot deny it, sir," assented Bertie meekly, to his sweetheart's indignation.

Old Nick proceeded bluntly: "The fact that many other fathers in New York have been blessed in a similar way is no consolation to me. Thank Heaven, I have one son who is an honor to our family, and to my name! The colossal fortune which I have accumulated shall be my monument, sir. I shall leave him my entire property, without exception, and he will continue the vast business interests which I have acquired. As for you, sir, your monthly allowance ceases from this date. I have made an arrangement with our business agents, Messrs. Watson Flint and Company, under which they will give you a certain amount in cash." As he spoke he rummaged among the papers on his desk and selected one. "You may do what you please with it; but it ought to last long enough for you to establish yourself in a decent position, where you can make your own living. Beyond this, sir, you shall have no part or parcel of my property, either while I am living or after I am gone."

At this sternly delivered death sentence, for such in effect it appeared to Bertie, the poor fellow was dumfounded. He could only stammer, half chokingly: "Father! I—I'm sure I'm—I'm very grateful to you—for—for giving me anything—and for—for all

you've done for me before." And overcome, he dropped weakly into a chair.

But the effect upon Agnes was far different. Facing the senior Vanalstyne with blazing cheeks and flashing eyes, she addressed him vehemently:

"And I say that you are a wicked, hard-hearted old man! I love Bertie, whether you do or not, and I'm going to be his wife!"

The old man gazed at her for a moment in blank amazement, and then he gasped: "You! You are going to be his wife, Agnes? Are you in earnest?"

"Yes, indeed, I'm in earnest!" exclaimed Agnes, with a defiant uprearing of her pretty head. "I just this moment told him I would. I've loved him for a long time, too, and I've been waiting for him to ask me. Bertie'll make a dear, good husband; and I don't care whether he has any money or not."

"Well," said Vanalstyne, who had had time to recover a little, "as you please, if you will insist on being a beggar's wife."

He advanced toward Bertie, extending the draft he still held in his hand, and then he hesitated. If such a girl as Agnes loved this boy, there must be more in him than he had thought; and, after all, he was his own flesh and blood.

"But, if you're going to be married," he said, at last, slowly, "I—I suppose you'll need a little more."

As he spoke, he tore up the draft, and, returning to his desk, proceeded to make out another.

Agnes went over to Bertie, and, kneeling down beside him, slipped her hand into his.

"We'll live in a little cottage together, Bertie," she murmured tenderly. "I'll do the work and you can help me. We won't need any money."

"Yes," returned Bertie vaguely.

Mr. Vanalstyne rose and came toward them. "There you are, sir," he said gruffly, putting a slip of paper into his son's hand, and immediately walk-

ing away. "Damned young pauper!" he said to himself, with a queer expression about his thin lips. "I'll turn him adrift on the world."

Bertie mechanically glanced at the draft, and then started to his feet with a suppressed cry. "Agnes!" he cried, with marvelous excitement for him. "Look! Five hundred thousand dollars! Oh, father!" making a step forward.

But Old Nick waved him back. "Not a cent more!" he growled savagely.

## CHAPTER II.

Nicholas Vanalstyne, Junior, was a much perplexed and an even more worried man. In the first place, he had had one or two fainting fits, which had alarmed his wife, and had made Doctor Wainwright look graver than ever. One of these spells had attacked him at a critical moment, and he had fallen insensible at the telephone, just as he was giving important directions to his financial agent, the broker, Watson Flint.

This Watson Flint was his own cousin, a son of his father's sister, and Old Nick's agent as well. Upon young Nick's seizure, Flint had been forced to take matters into his own hands. From what he then learned and what came to his knowledge afterward, he arrived at an astounding conclusion, and the exact truth. Nicholas Vanalstyne, Junior, was at the head of a powerful bear clique, bent on ruining his own father in the great Henrietta mine scheme. With his son as secret enemy, even the father's enormous fortune might melt away, and if the plot succeeded the junior, and not the senior, Vanalstyne would be the master of Wall Street.

Watson Flint was not slow to acquaint his cousin with the fact that he had obtained this information. Up to the present, young Nick had managed in one way or another, by bribes and promises, to prevent Flint from divulging the secret. But there was no knowing how long the present condition of affairs would continue. He felt as if

he were standing over a moral Vesuvius, which might at any time break into eruption.

There was another thing also, which troubled young Nick not a little; though not so much as the first—for, with that young man, the affairs of the heart were ever second in importance to the affairs of the pocket. Gertrude Reynolds was dead—this to his relief—but before she died, she had fulfilled her threat, and written to his wife, sending with the letter a separate packet. Fortunately or unfortunately, as it may be for those immediately concerned, both young Nick and Parke Wainwright were with Rose Vanalstyne when the letter and packet were brought to her.

She read the letter in bewilderment, and, in spite of her undoubted love for her husband, whose real nature she had never fathomed, with considerable suspicion.

Then, suddenly, she read it again, this time aloud, so that both men could hear its contents. In explanation of her act, it should be stated that she looked upon Doctor Wainwright as the most intimate friend of both herself and her husband, little suspecting that the doctor's feeling was something far warmer than friendship. Long ago Wainwright had fallen desperately in love with Vanalstyne's beautiful young wife, but he would have cut his tongue out rather than breathe it to her.

The first part of the letter told the old, old story of a woman's wrongs at the hands of a heartless man, but, to the boundless relief of both the listeners, no name was mentioned. In conclusion, it said:

"I have had bitter and wicked thoughts, but they have all passed away in the shadows of approaching death. I think now only of my child, not of revenge on him, but he must be sacrificed for her. I know how good you are; Doctor Wainwright has told me; and he has tried to save you from this. But a dying mother appeals to you. It is my last desperate chance. Do all you can for my little one. The doctor will tell you where she is. The letters to me from her father, which I send with this, will tell you the rest. You know the handwriting well.

"GERTRUDE REYNOLDS."

As Rose raised her eyes from the letter, there was a look of terror in them which struck Wainwright to the heart. Involuntarily, with some half-formed plan of protecting the woman he loved, in spite of the fact that he knew only too well the worthless character of the man whose name she bore, he had picked up the packet from the table where she had laid it.

Her glance fell upon it, and mutely she stretched out her hand.

Wainwright hesitated, and before he could come to a determination Vanalstyne interposed, speaking very quickly, but otherwise with no manifestation of emotion.

"Will you kindly leave Rose and me together a few moments, doctor?"

Such a request could not be ignored. Wainwright bowed in acquiescence; but, as he turned to go, he said, addressing Rose:

"It is your right to have the letters, Mrs. Vanalstyne. They were sent to you. If you insist upon it, after an interview with your husband, I will give them to you."

As the door closed behind him, Mrs. Vanalstyne sank down upon an ottoman, and covering her face with her hands, began to sob.

With an expression compounded of irritation and determination, young Nick came to her side.

"Rose," he said, speaking very quietly, "I need hardly say that I am sorry this exposure has come at last. I would have concealed it entirely from you, but I may as well speak frankly to you now. I have known of this affair from the first." Rose's hands dropped into her lap and she looked up at him, with eager, parted lips. "I have thought all along that it would be better for Agnes' future for her not to marry my brother Bertie."

"Bertie?" she gasped.

"I ought to have told you about it long ago," he went on evenly, "when Agnes was first becoming interested in him. But you'll forgive me, my dear old girl, won't you?"

A man has to be convinced by rea-

son, but a woman almost invariably believes what she wants to believe; and Rose Vanalstyne was no exception to the rule.

"Forgive you!" she cried, starting up and throwing herself into her husband's outstretched arms. "Forgive you! It's you that must forgive me for my cruel suspicions."

And so another victory was credited to young Nick's policy, the policy which placed self beyond all else and cared little or nothing for the suffering of others.

That night there was a dinner party at the Vanalstynes', given in honor of a charming widow, Mrs. Cornelia Opdyke, whom Old Nick admired to such an extent that he had even given her points on his beloved Henrietta. On her side, the widow, who was very quick-witted, had not been slow to perceive the lovable side of the famous financier; and had about made up her mind to a favorable answer should he ask for her hand.

It was a very gay party, but Agnes, somehow, could not enter into the spirit of it. She had noticed the freezing way in which her sister looked at and spoke to Bertie, and it troubled and bewildered her. Then, just before dinner, she had overheard fragments of a conversation between Bertie and an English friend of his, in which Bertie had said:

"We'll drive out to the race track to-morrow in my new English dog-cart; I haven't any dogs, but I drive out my other friends in it. We'll go to the races together, and we will see Henrietta."

To be sure, Bertie had afterward explained to her indignant questioning that this was not the Henrietta at all whose photograph he had promised to burn, but a chestnut filly from Kentucky which he and the Englishman were going to bet on and share the results between them. But Agnes was only half satisfied; she was very young, very much in love, and consequently inclined to be jealous.

After dinner, Bertie sought out his little sweetheart, and tried in his bun-

gling, halting way to explain more fully.

They were in the hall, a superb baronial apartment, wainscoted in old carved oak, and with a monumental fireplace of the same material. Here and there were balconies, approached by spiral staircases, hanging like bird's nests from the wall.

Bertie felt that he was making respectable progress in winning Agnes' confidence, when Rose Vanalstyne, followed by her husband and Doctor Wainwright, suddenly appeared in one of the portière-draped doorways. She hesitated a moment as she saw the couple by the fireplace, and then came resolutely toward them.

"Agnes."

Agnes started and turned. "Yes, Rose."

"I was looking for you. Go to your room, my child. I have something to say to him," with a brief, icy glance at Bertie, "that it is not right for you to hear."

From Rose's look and tone, Agnes knew that what she had to impart was painful, but the girl resolved that, whatever it was, she had a right to hear it; and she declared as much to her sister, her pretty lips set obstinately.

"Very well," said Rose, resigning herself to the inevitable. "Perhaps it may be better that you should hear." She turned to the young man. "Bertie, you and my sister are engaged to be married."

"Yes," assented Bertie simply, totally unconscious of the electricity in the air.

Then the lightning struck.

"That engagement must be broken off."

"Broken off!" gasped Bertie and Agnes simultaneously.

"I insist upon it," said Rose firmly. "I always knew that you were a fool, Bertie."

Bertie gave a sigh of relief. Oh, if that were the only reason, it was of no consequence at all.

"Agnes knew that before she loved me," he protested ingenuously; and Agnes nodded her head approvingly.

"If she had known what I know now," continued Rose severely, "she could *never* have loved you. I did not believe that you and your silly companions at the club were anything worse than fools."

"We aren't," again protested Bertie. "We only pretend to be. I told Agnes all about it. What have you heard?"

Rose fixed an accusing and reproachful look upon him.

"The worst I could possibly hear," she replied slowly. "You have ruined, and cruelly deserted, a woman who loved and trusted you."

All the color fled from Agnes' lovely cheeks, and, with a little cry of grief and horror, she sank helplessly down upon one of the settees near the fireplace; while poor Bertie, dazed, and not believing his ears, could only manage to gasp out: "I—have—what?"

Young Nick and the doctor had been standing at a little distance, quietly but intently listening to the conversation. But at Rose's last words, Wainwright suddenly understood the full import of what was going on, and with a shock of revolt and disgust, he thought: "He has thrown the blame on his brother, and made me a participant in the crime."

"You know perfectly what I mean," went on Rose, a palpable sneer in her eyes and tone, "though I dare say you have been too careless to learn the whole sad truth. Doctor Wainwright can tell you that. He was at her side to-day, where you ought to have been also. Ask him what I have heard this afternoon."

"Sister Rose," protested Bertie miserably, but with a certain pathetic dignity, "I declare to you, on the word of honor of a gentleman, that I know nothing whatever about the matter you speak of."

Agnes started, and looked up hopefully, but before Rose could say anything further, Wainwright's resolve was taken. He would protect young Nick no longer. Taking the fateful packet from his pocket, he advanced toward Rose.

"Mrs. Vanalstyne, here is the packet

which was sent to you this afternoon."

Rose took the bundle of letters from his outstretched hand, while a thrill of alarm ran through young Nick. He did not think it wise to interfere at that juncture, however, so adopted the Fabian policy, and remained where he was, watching the little group intently.

"A packet of letters to the poor woman from the man who deserted her," said Rose, distinctly and accusingly, as she advanced to Bertie's side and put the packet in his cold fingers. Then she returned and sat down by Agnes, who was shivering as if with a chill.

Slowly, and in a bewildered manner, Bertie unwrapped the packet and looked at the letters; then he started violently, a start which was variously interpreted by the different spectators.

"Well, do you know the handwriting?" demanded Rose impatiently, and with a look of scorn on her handsome features.

"Yes," said Bertie in a suffocated tone. "I—"

He stopped, unable to go on, and Agnes, taking this for a confession of guilt, sobbed aloud. Rose put her arm tenderly around her, and bent over to whisper such words of comfort as she could.

Bertie raised his eyes and met those of his brother. Young Nick pointed to Rose appealingly, and shook his head as if imploring silence.

Bertie felt entrapped, caught in meshes he could not undo. He hesitated a minute, gave one agonized glance at Agnes, and suddenly turned and, with a heart as heavy as lead within him, dropped the packet into the fire.

Then, without a word, he slowly left the room.

### CHAPTER III.

Two weeks later, there came a certain Friday which Wall Street is not soon likely to forget, and which had a tremendous effect upon the future of all the Vanalstyne family.

All morning long the market had been feverish, and about noon the squall

struck suddenly; all stocks tumbled, but the Henrietta Mining and Land Company was the centre of attack. Its stock began to go down with a rush—and Old Nick Vanalstyne was away on his yacht, entertaining Mrs. Opdyke.

The head of the firm of Watson Flint and Company, Stock Exchange brokers, as he sat in his private office with his eyes glued to the ticker, thoroughly understood the cause of the commotion, and who was at the bottom of it all.

Young Nick Vanalstyne had been waiting for an opportunity like this, when his father should be away, to strike the final blow, after fighting against him in secret for more than three months. He had been working the market to-day from the private office of his father's bitterest enemy on the Street. If he succeeded in beating down the price of Henrietta to sixty-five, before three o'clock, Nicholas Vanalstyne, Senior, would be ruined and Nicholas Vanalstyne, Junior, would be a millionaire many times over.

It was with a heavy heart that Watson Flint, as the early afternoon wore on, watched the price of the Henrietta sink lower and lower. He was not a conscienceless man; he was indebted to Old Nick for many favors; and he thoroughly despised the younger Vanalstyne. It was true that he had accepted the latter's commissions, while quite aware of his schemes, but this he looked on as a matter of business.

Shortly after two o'clock, to Flint's surprise and relief, Old Nick rushed into his office. He had, by some fortunate accident, returned earlier than he had expected, to find himself in the very midst of this financial earthquake. He was dismayed, but by no means overwhelmed. He had faced fifty panics before, and there was plenty of fight left in the old man yet.

"Hello, Watson," he greeted him, hurriedly, but cheerily. "The bears have been playing the devil with me this morning, haven't they? But the old bull has come back. Watch the blue empyrean above my horns. You'll see a thousand bears pawing the air



presently." Then, with savage earnestness: "Strange that I can't find out who my real enemy is. When I do find him, I'll crush him to the earth! But, in the meantime, the fight's still on. How much ammunition have you left? And where's Nick? What securities have you used up so far?"

Flint turned scarlet, hesitated, and then said bluntly:

"The securities are all gone. I gave them to Nick upon your authority, as your representative."

Old Nick's jaw dropped, and there was a momentary blurring of his vision. Then he roared:

"The securities all gone! Why, then — What do you mean, man?"

But before Flint could answer, the door was flung open, and young Nick burst impetuously in. His father was standing a little outside of his line of vision, and he was too excited to notice that there was any third party present.

"I have won, Flint," he cried. "I have won. Henrietta is down to sixty-eight, and I am the bear who did it. I am worth millions. I wonder what the old man will say when——"

Flint made a warning gesture, and young Nick, turning, saw his father.

The old man had listened as in a dream, but as young Nick stopped, a realization of the truth, of who this secret enemy really was, came upon him, and overpowered him. He breathed fast, and his eyes shot gleams of lambent fire from under his bushy brows, while unconsciously one hand reached out for the back of a chair near by, grasped it, and held it in a vise.

For a moment the two men faced each other; then young Nick recovered himself. Of course, he had known that this was bound to come, and he had more or less prepared himself for it. "My dear father," he began, with much of his accustomed calm suavity of manner, "let me explain matters. You have thought it to your own interest to increase the value of the Henrietta Mining and Land Company. I have found that my interests lay in the opposite direction."

"Go on, sir," said Old Nick, in a hard, strained voice, the veins bulging out upon his forehead.

"I have done what seemed best for my own business interests," proceeded young Nick, in an absolutely cold-blooded manner. "You have lost your fortune to-day, but I have gained one. I will settle upon you an allowance of ten thousand dollars a year."

With a roar like that of a maddened bull, Old Nick swung the chair above his head, and advanced a step toward his son.

"You scoundrel!" he yelled.

Watson Flint started forward to intervene, but it was needless. Suddenly, the revulsion of feeling came. The purple color faded from Old Nick's face, leaving it the tint of parchment, and the chair fell from his nerveless fingers with a crash. His head sank upon his breast, as if a heavy weight had suddenly fallen upon it.

"My son!" he groaned heavily. "My loved and trusted son! My God! My own son!" And, swaying like a drunken man, he staggered from the room.

Young Nick looked after him for a moment in silence, but when he turned again to Flint there was nothing but triumph in his cold, fishlike eyes, and he cried, undeterred by the look of contempt upon his companion's face:

"I shall be master of Wall Street yet! Master of Wall Street!"

And he, too, left the office, but by a different door from that used by his father.

With a sigh, Watson Flint turned again to the ticker. The Henrietta was down to sixty-five.

He was roused, after a few minutes, from his contemplation, by the sound of a soft, drawling voice that he knew well, and he looked up to see the younger scion of the Vanalstyne family standing just within the doorway.

Bertie did not look well; much of his usual bright color was gone, and his eyes were heavy, as if from dissipation, which, indeed, was the truth. He had sacrificed himself, to be sure, for the sake of others, but he did not find much consolation in the thought.

On the contrary, it was bitter, unspeakably bitter, to have all his fancy palaces tumbled about his ears like this. Agnes he had not seen since that eventful night—he had left his father's house and taken up his residence at a hotel—and he did not wish to see her, as there was no way that he could clear himself in her eyes.

"Oh, Bertie, is that you?" said Flint indifferently.

"Yes, Cousin Watson," replied Bertie, advancing into the room, "I am launched upon a career of maddening dissipation."

"Indeed!"

"I have become a wild and desperate gambler. During the last two weeks, I have been visiting faro banks and other dens of iniquity. I have at last come down to Wall Street. I desire to encounter a tiger of a larger size and more savage nature. They tell me I shall find such an animal here. The smaller ones have ceased to distract my thoughts."

"You wish to purchase a few shares of stock?" inquired Flint, still absent-mindedly.

"Yes, I will take a few dozen chips to begin with. What do you charge for them?"

Just then, from the street below, came the raucous voice of a newsboy, yelling: "All about the Henrietta! All about Vanalstyne and Henrietta!"

Bertie pricked up his ears. Was he never to hear the end of that miserable name, the name that had been the cause of most of his troubles?

"What does that mean—all about Vanalstyne and Henrietta?" he asked Flint sharply.

"It means," said Flint briefly, "that your father has lost his fortune."

Bertie looked at him in amazement, as if he could not quite understand.

"Father!" he faltered. "Father has lost his fortune?"

Flint nodded. "Just that."

Bertie's honest heart contracted with pain. He loved his father, and anything that struck at Old Nick struck at Bertie, too. As he realized the ex-

tent of the calamity, he cried impulsively:

"Why, father gave me half a million dollars a few weeks ago. I'll give him back what is left of it."

Flint turned sharply toward him, a sudden thought darting into his mind.

"How much have you?"

"I've been getting rid of it as fast as I could, but there's more than four hundred thousand dollars of it left in the bank."

"In the bank?" repeated Flint excitedly, obsessed by his idea. "It is still there? Perhaps you can save your father yet."

Bertie caught the other's excitement, his generous heart ablaze at the possibility.

"Where is he?" he cried, starting for the door. "I'll give it to him at once!"

But Flint laid a detaining hand upon his arm.

"No, no!" he half pleaded, half commanded. "It is too late for that! He is gone, and it is twenty minutes to three. There is not a second to be lost. Make out a check to my order."

Bertie allowed himself to be pushed down into a chair by the desk, and, as meekly as the lamb he had proclaimed himself to be to Agnes, obeyed Flint, and wrote out the check.

Meanwhile, the broker was thinking rapidly: "I can order forty thousand shares with this margin; and the enemy is unprepared. They think the victory is gained. The panic will set in the opposite way like a torrent."

He almost snatched the check which Bertie extended to him.

"What are you going to do with it?" cried the donor.

"Henrietta! Henrietta!" was the enthusiastic response, as Flint dashed away.

Bertie fell back in his chair, overcome at the repetition of that fateful name.

A few minutes later, Nicholas Vanalstyne, Junior, bending over the indicator in the office of his father's enemy, received a terrible shock. The words

as they ran off seemed to sear his very brain.

"Heavy and unexpected orders for the Vanalstyne stocks. Wild excitement. Prices bounding up. Henrietta seventy-nine — eighty — eighty-three — eighty-five."

He had tried to ruin his father; and it was he himself who was ruined.

"Eighty-eight—ninety."

The indicator fell, and his hand went to his heart. One point higher than yesterday, and the exchange was closed. The Henrietta was safe.

A clerk in the outer office heard a shrill scream, like that of some wild beast deprived of its prey, and, rushing in, saw his patron fall heavily to the floor.

Parke Wainwright, summoned in haste, saw at a glance that it was too late. His prediction, made so often, had been verified.

"Tick on! Tick on!" he thought, as the indicator began to buzz again. "Bring fortune—and despair—to the living; the ear of a dead man cannot hear you."

#### CHAPTER IV.

The next eighteen months were strenuous ones for Old Nick Vanalstyne. Although his fortune was saved by the quickness of Watson Flint, incidentally assisted by Bertie, still his reputation on the Street as an astute financier was impaired, and it took some time to regain it. Then, the discovery of young Nick's duplicity, with its tragic result, was a terrible blow to his father, from which he took a long time to recover.

There were two things, however, which went far to console Old Nick. He at last persuaded the fair widow, Mrs. Opydyke, to bestow her somewhat opulent charms upon him; and the wedding was set for an early date. Then, Bertie had plunged into Wall Street, and, wonder of wonders, had developed into a remarkably successful speculator. It seemed as though everything he touched was bound to go his way; and, finally, to his father's unmitigated pride, he actually became

known as the Young Napoleon of the Street.

And, strange to say, it did not lessen this pride one bit when Old Nick discovered Bertie's *modus operandi*.

He chanced to be in Flint's office one day, when the young man was giving the broker an order, and, to Flint's question, "Buy or sell," he heard Bertie say solemnly: "I will consider," and then openly toss a coin on his knee to decide the question.

"Is that your regular method on the Street?" he asked curiously.

"That is the intellectual process, father," Bertie replied, with naïve nonchalance. "It takes brains to deal on the Stock Exchange."

Old Nick considered the matter for a moment with an odd mixture of humor and gravity, and then he shook the Young Napoleon warmly by the hand.

"Let me congratulate you, young man," he said heartily, but with a twinkle in his shrewd eyes. "You have discovered the system on which the leading financiers of this great country conduct their business interests."

But to Bertie himself this always winning grew monotonous. He said sadly to himself that in his case the old proverb was true: "Unlucky in love, lucky at cards." For young Nick's death had not cleared the situation between Agnes and himself in the least.

True, Doctor Wainwright had once said to him: "*His* crime still keeps you apart. I am the only man living who could clear your character, and make you both happy."

But Bertie had answered simply, but with a stab at his heart: "You have told me, from the first, that you would do so at any moment—if I asked you. But—I do not ask you."

"I am grateful to you for that, Bertie. It would pain her too deeply."

"When Brother Nicholas died, a black curtain was drawn over it all. Perhaps things will come right some day, but I can't open his grave; it would be too horrible."

At Old Nick's earnest request, Rose had continued to reside at the Vanal-

styne mansion, on Fifth Avenue. It had seemed best to her, however, to send Agnes away, and the young girl had passed the last year and a half with some aunts in Boston. She had now returned, however, and almost her first question was for Bertie; and it did not take long for Rose to find out, to her great regret, that the long absence had not affected a cure in the state of her dear little sister's heart.

It was of this, and other things, that Rose was thinking as she sat alone, one morning, in the drawing-room, a day or two after Agnes' return. Upon a table beside her was a large framed photograph of her late husband, and to this her eyes would wander, as if seeking inspiration and counsel. It was no small quandary that Rose Vanalstyne found herself in that morning. She knew now, and had known for some time, that Parke Wainwright loved her with all the strength of his manly heart. And she? She longed to trust herself to his guidance, and yet it seemed a disloyalty to the dead man whom she had sincerely, if mistakenly, loved. She sighed as she wondered if she had been as true to her first love as Agnes had been to hers.

But the issue could no longer be evaded. She had just received a note from Wainwright, asking the very question she had so long both dreaded and hoped for, and the answer could not be deferred.

She was deep in a reverie, not altogether pleasant, when, to her surprise and consternation, the writer of the note was announced.

He came at once toward her, with both hands outstretched, and she rose to meet him. Her face was very pale and her eyes shone brilliant, like twin stars.

"Forgive my impatience, but I could not wait," he exclaimed, without preamble. "What is your answer?"

"I—I have had a dozen different ones," she stammered, her eyes falling before the fire in his.

"Yes, or no?"

"I forget which the last one was."

He sprang toward her.

"Ah!" he cried triumphantly. "You mean 'yes.' I will give you no time to change it again."

But she pushed him gently from her.

"Oh, I have misled you," she said pitifully. "I did not intend to say what I did. I have hesitated, but I—I—"

Her eyes fell upon the picture on the table, and she stopped short. Wainwright, following her gaze, saw the picture, too, and he understood. His memory stood between them like a solid wall. His *sacred* memory! The mere shadow of treachery and deceit!

The very thought of it roused all the antagonism in Wainwright's nature.

"Your love is mine, Rose, not his!" he cried passionately. "I loved you before he saw you, and when he gained your heart, I suffered in silence. I bore the torture for months and years. I tried to save him from death, and did save him for a time, that you might not suffer as I have. But Heaven itself decreed that you should be free; that you should return at last my long-tried love. You are mine, Rose, mine!"

"No, no, no!" she retorted desperately, clinging to the table for support. "I will not forget him! I cannot!"

"His memory shall not stand between us!" asseverated Wainwright fiercely, casting everything aside except his great longing for this one woman. "I will tell you the truth! The whole truth! That man to whom you gave your spotless life, that man to whom you brought the perfect faith of a young girl, that—"

Suddenly, he caught her quick breathing, and saw the terrified look in her beautiful eyes, and he ceased abruptly, brought to his senses.

"What was I about to do?" he went on remorsefully, after a pause. "What have I been saying? I'm dreaming. I'm wild. My words mean nothing—nothing! Cling to your memories, Rose; they are tender and pure, like the heart in which they grow."

She had sunk into a chair, weak and trembling. After a long look, surcharged with love and grief, he turned to go.

But it was not in the lap of destiny, about to turn kind, that this was to be the end of it. The *dea ex machina* suddenly appeared, in the comely person of Mrs. Cornelia Opdyke, a delightful vision in a walking costume of indubitable Parisian manufacture.

"Oh, I beg your pardon!" she exclaimed, as she saw the telltale attitude of the two before her.

Rose got to her feet, trying to efface the traces of her recent agitation.

"Sorry to interrupt you," proceeded Mrs. Opdyke cheerily, as though she had noticed nothing. "But I must have a few moments' conversation with Rose—in private. Doctor——"

"I have just finished my call," he interrupted, a little stiffly, and once more started for the door.

"Don't leave the house just yet," said Mrs. Opdyke, in a pleading and significant tone. "I shall have something to say to you, also. I'll meet you in the—the little pink room at the end of the hall."

He bowed in acquiescence. "I will wait for you."

Mrs. Opdyke stood looking after Wainwright for a moment after he left, and then, suddenly turning to Rose, she exclaimed emphatically:

"Rose, I should be in love with that man if you weren't!"

"What nonsense, Cornelia!" cried Rose, but with a little tremor in her voice.

"Not a bit of it! I really should," protested Mrs. Opdyke stoutly. "But that's not what I came to see you about." She paused an instant, and then went on, quite conscious of the dramatic effect she was about to produce, and, on the whole, enjoying it. "I've brought a little package of *dynamite* with me! And I'm going to explode it right here—*now!*"

"Dynamite!" repeated Rose vaguely.

Cornelia Opdyke glanced at her a little anxiously. She was not quite sure what would be the result of the words she was about to speak, but she had made up her mind to speak them; and, when the widow had once made up her mind, there was no wavering.

"One doesn't like to interfere in family matters, you know; otherwise, I should have taken the roof off this house long ago. I have hesitated; and this little packet of *nitroglycerine* has lain all this time in one of my jewel caskets. But when Mr. Vanalstyne told me this morning that Agnes had come back and that you were trying to persuade him to order Bertie off to Europe, I took this little bundle of *gun cotton* out of my dressing case as soon as I got home. 'Now is your time to go off!' said I."

"Cornelia, what are you talking about?" asked Rose, mystified, as well she might be.

"You are in love with Doctor Wainwright," was the apparently irrelevant reply.

"As I have told you before, Cornelia," began Rose, with dignity, but the other airily interrupted her.

"It is nonsense? Of course it is—and very delightful nonsense, too. I've seen it coming on gradually for the last six months. I've been waiting for it."

The blood rushed in a torrent to Rose's cheeks. This was too much, even from such a near friend as Cornelia Opdyke.

"I will not allow you to speak so flippantly on a subject which ought to be sacred, even to you," she declared, with an effort at control. "No, Cornelia, I am true, I shall always be true, to *his* memory."

As she spoke, she indicated the portrait upon the table. Mrs. Opdyke glanced at it, and then burst into a peal of derisive laughter.

"True to *his* memory!" she scoffed, with a scornful wave of her hand toward the picture.

Rose was shocked and horrified beyond measure. "Cornelia!" she cried. "This is horrible! You are cruel—heartless! It is sacrilege!"

But Mrs. Opdyke was not in the least affected by this outburst.

"True to that miserable traitor and lying knave!" she exclaimed vehemently. "False alike to his father, and

to his wife! No! You needn't try to stop me! I will go on."

"I will not listen to you!"

"Then listen to *him*; and believe your own eyes. Do you remember one night—I was dining here, and happened to be on one of the balconies in the hall—you accused your husband's younger brother of ruining and deserting a woman who loved him? You gave him a packet of letters that had been written to her by her lover, and you asked him if he recognized the handwriting."

As she spoke, Mrs. Opdyke drew from her bosom a package, deliberately took off the tissue paper which enveloped it, and revealed a charred, half-burned bundle of letters.

"Do *you* recognize the handwriting?"

Rose took the package extended to her. One glance was sufficient. She did recognize the handwriting. She tottered, and fell, sobbing, into Mrs. Opdyke's arms.

The widow, beyond a comforting pat or two, made no attempt to arrest the flow of tears. "They'll soon wash out all there is left of his memory in her heart," she thought to herself.

At last Rose's sobs ceased, and she raised her head.

"I am ill, Cornelia!" she murmured. "I am ill!"

"Suppose I call Doctor Wainwright," suggested Mrs. Opdyke slyly.

"Oh, don't do that!"

"I'll send the doctor to you."

"Not for the world!"

"I'll send him away."

"Oh, no! You—you needn't do that."

She released herself from the widow's embrace, glanced shamefacedly at her, and hurried away.

"He's in the little pink room at the end of the hall," Mrs. Opdyke called after her, and then she laughed heartily. "My dynamite explosion has cleared the atmosphere!" she thought, with glee.

It is unnecessary to recount the in-

terview in the little pink room. But one ending was possible.

Rose was too generous to neglect, in her own happiness, the happiness of others. That very afternoon she sent for Bertie, and took care when he arrived that Agnes, with whom she had previously had an earnest conversation, should be in the drawing-room alone.

There were no heroics between the two young people as they met.

"Bertie!"

"Agnes!"

"Rose says it was all a terrible mistake, Bertie, and we may——"

"My darling!"

But she warded him off, smiling, nevertheless, and all blushes and dimples.

"Rose says it's all right," she repeated, "but I want to know about all those Henriettas."

"Oh! Henrietta is the name of a corporation."

"Which one of them," she asked, laughter dancing in her brown eyes, "is the corporation? The ballet dancer or the chestnut filly?"

"I will explain," said Bertie, encircling her with his arm, and drawing her down on a sofa beside him. "You see—the corporation—it isn't the ballet dancer; neither is the filly, she isn't the corporation, either. It's this way: The filly is one Henrietta; and so is the corporation, and the ballet dancer, too."

Agnes nodded, as if thoroughly understanding this extremely lucid explanation. But apparently Bertie was not satisfied, for he proceeded:

"Agnes, I confessed to you at the very first that I was as innocent as a newborn lamb, and you said you loved me in spite of it. I don't know anything more about Henrietta than you do, and I never did."

Agnes smiled happily and trustfully.

"That's all I want to know," she declared conclusively. "I don't care who she is!" And she nestled close to him.

Bertie laughed, a ringing, boyish laugh, exultant, triumphant.

Then he bent over and kissed her.





## Siniard

By Alma Martin Estabrook

ILLUSTRATED BY CH. GRUNWALD

SINIARD put aside the pot of orange paint with which he had been penciling a gay runabout, and, taking off his smeared overalls, crossed to a faucet in the corner of the shop, plunging head and hands beneath its spouting stream till they came forth with a fair show of cleanliness. Then he locked his front door, and stood for an instant in the rear one, looking out.

Stretches of sapphire bay showed above the immediate debris of unkept back yards—stretches that rippled away seaward beneath a blue and tender sky. But sea and sky and bay were all old stories to him, and he saw a more material vision. The shabby shop and the buggy-cluttered yard that belonged to it, at the foot of the incline on which he stood, both fretted him. He had got on. He had saved money. He would have a decent shop in a decent

street, where better trade would come to him; and, then, success continuing to attend him, why should he not—He broke off here, as he always did, with a slow crimsoning of his rough cheeks and a warm and pleasant glow at his heart.

His weight made the incline creak as he passed down it. He went through a shabby street or two until he came to a row of fog-washed houses, sitting high and tottering on inadequate foundations. At the one between the Chinese doctor's and a palmist's he turned in. A leaking gas jet lighted the narrow, oilcloth-covered hall, and he hung his cap on a hall hat rack with most of the knobs gone, and went into the dining room, beyond, the pleasant feeling still at his heart.

The landlady was leaning against an ornate sideboard, from which red-

fringed napkins depended in many points. She smiled a smile of unusual friendliness at him as he dropped into the place reserved for him, because of his great bulk, at the end of the table. Near the other end Ketley sat, and, midway between, the landlady's daughter, Ethel.

Ketley was a small, immaculate man, with a narrow head and shifting blue eyes. His hair and brows and mustache were so light as to seem almost gray. He wore lavender neckties, or pink, or gentle blue, as became his fair skin, but never a single honest man's color. He did not look up when Siniard sat down, but went on supping his soup rather fussily, stopping every few spoonful to give elaborate attention to his neat little mustache.

The girl nodded indifferently at Siniard, and played with her rings. The air of things suspended was unmistakable. He felt that he had come at the telling of an amusing story and had stopped it midway. He took the dishes his landlady brought and ate consciously and uncomfortably. He did not speak—he never spoke until he was addressed, and that was rarely enough here, when Ketley held forth.

At last the landlady fluttered: "Why don't you tell Mr. Siniard? I know he'd like to hear."

Siniard looked up with polite interrogation at that, but Ketley did not glance his way. He did not care whether Mr. Siniard would "like to hear" or not, and he showed it. He always showed his utter disregard for the big, splotchy-fingered carriage painter. The girl, however, smiled patronizingly at him. No one understood better than she the difference between Siniard's social rung and Mr. Ketley's, but she was a vain creature, demanding homage from every quarter; besides, Siniard was one of their best-paying boarders, and she could not afford to snub him too often, so she stretched her hand amiably in his direction.

It was a white hand, well enough shaped, with neglected nails—to Siniard it was like the marvelously mod-

eled hand of a divinity. Several cheap stones adorned it, and among them there sparkled a small diamond. She turned the lesser lights away from it, flashing it on him with a frank laugh.

"I guess you know what that means," she said, her glance passing to Ketley, where it settled with affectionate significance.

The warmth left Siniard's heart. It was no longer a big thing, pleasantly alive in his breast, but something shriveled and cold, and unspeakably heavy. He looked about him bewilderedly, and met Ketley's smile, arrogant and a little taunting—for Ketley had seen what he had not meant to show. The girl laughed lightly at his surprise, and her mother regarded him with sudden comprehension and pity.

He said something forced and stupid, and the flow of talk went on where he had interrupted it. It was of a quiet wedding, with all the boarders absent, of a trip up the coast, and, after, of a nice little house in a good street. Mr. Ketley clerked in Carrither's drug store, in the next block, and he hoped he could afford to give his wife the comforts she had not had. He finished his supper while they talked, and, throwing himself into a big chair by the window, rolled a cigarette, and smoked it puffingly. He wore a particularly brilliant waistcoat and a smug blue tie, and the girl watched him, with admiring eyes.

She was a showy little thing, with bright color and red, petulant lips. Between her brows two straight lines cut sharply up and down. Siniard thought her the prettiest girl he had ever seen. That her stylish blouses were always slightly soiled he never noticed for looking at her eyes and her tremendously stately pompadour, and for admiring her smart little stocks, that she was clever enough to make for herself. He looked at her now aching. He had never dreamed she could care for Charlie Ketley. He had not guessed how much he himself loved her. She had been the vivifying influence in his whole life, the one thing of beauty that had touched it. He had

not thought of a time when he would not see her daily. And in his heart, vague and sweet, and never clearly defined, there were always hopes and plans that wrapped about her.

And now—now she was to give herself to another! And to such another! Over his cup he stared at the gaudy figure in the big chair, and hated it. He hated any man who decked himself out like a silly girl, who could not look you in the eyes, and who gave you a nerveless hand when you offered him yours. He could wring such a chap as a woman wrings a limp cloth.

He was a kindly, uncritical fellow, easily satisfied with his neighbors, and making few exactions of his friends, but his honest soul had always found Ketley wanting. He had never trusted him, and that Ethel's happiness should rest in his careless hands seemed to him little short of monstrous.

Kind little Mrs. Crozier set dish after dish before him. She seemed somehow to understand his bewilderment and his hurt, and contrived to let him know that she understood, and was sorry. Yet he could see that she was not entirely regretful to have a son-in-law so prosperous and well set up as Ketley. She was a simple soul—simpler even than he—unused to making her own estimates, and invariably going wrong in them. He finished his supper—he would have seemed to eat it, though it choked him—and went out into the hall, saying good night naturally enough as he left, and the landlady followed him. She could not bear to see any one suffer. She knew so well what suffering meant, how it made even the bones of your body ache till they seemed to be a part of the heart itself. But she did not say this to him, being simply wise, but only that she wondered if the finger he hurt last week was really well, if it was going to be nice to-morrow so she could clean house, and why he hadn't brought her those socks to mend. She ran on vaguely, kindly, until, seeing some one at the foot of her steps, she stopped suddenly, staring. Two policemen came up toward them.

"There's a man in your dining room that we want, ma'am," one explained, and they passed in without waiting for permission.

She followed lurchingly, as if she had gone suddenly faint. In all her honest life no such dreadful visitors had ever shamed her portals before. She thought not so much of Ketley, in that first stunned moment, as of that—that officers of the law should invade her house. She looked at Siniard with her appealing and indignant eyes, and he went in with her; perhaps he would have gone in, anyway.

Charlie Ketley was struggling between the bluecoats, little and choleric and venomous. He protested, lips and limbs, against the indignity that was put upon him. He raved of innocence, and dug his heels into the carpet, sliding along stiffly between them. The girl was clamoring beside them for some explanation, which the police seemed not inclined to give her.

Siniard blocked the way.

"See here, what's up?" he demanded, and they replied at once, evidently considering his big bulk unpromising if it came to trouble.

"He's wanted for embezzlement. Carrithers charges him. He says he's been stealin' from him for months. He'll get a fair show, of course, and maybe bail, if—"

"If you mean that he'll get it if anybody'll furnish it," cried the girl, "I guess we'll see to that. You don't think we'll let him lay there, do you? There's plenty that would go his bail, and be glad. But we'll do it ourselves. Get your hat, mother, and come along. He shan't stay a night in that awful place."

She darted into a side room, and came out on the instant, pinning on a big black hat, heavy with red roses. Her cheeks were a deeper red, and her eyes flashed. She put her hand on Ketley's arm as she passed him, tossing her head in the faces of the policemen.

They moved toward the door with their prisoner, but little Mrs. Crozier, queerly bonneted, stopped them.



*"I'll take all we've got to pay the bail—the furniture and all."*

"Charlie," she adjured, solemnly and tremulously, "you didn't do it, did you? You didn't?"

Ketley laughed a harsh laugh. "Do you think I'm such a fool? Of course, I didn't."

She nodded, wiping her eyes, and stood aside, letting them go on with him, following meekly after, her arm through her daughter's.

Siniard watched them go, the men in the patrol wagon, the women in the street cars.

"God!" he muttered to himself. "Ain't it awful?" And he went up the steps again, and providently turned down the forgotten gas jets, that were burning at their highest, and, locking the door, put the key where he knew they would find it.

The next day he went early to his meals, that he might avoid Ketley. He felt he would choke the arrogant, shameless life out of him if he met him. He did not see Ethel, either; she had been in town every day for weeks,

learning stenography, having her supper late with Ketley. He was glad not to see her to-night, and he wished he might even have avoided poor little Mrs. Crozier, who looked as if she were carrying the burden of the shame on her thin shoulders. Her eyes were dim and puzzled behind the huge glasses she always wore, and when she served him he saw that her hands shook, but she professed a certain cheerfulness, declaring that Ketley would have no trouble at all in acquitting himself.

The trouble was, she explained—it having been carefully explained to her by Ketley—that the other clerks in the store, and even Carrithers himself, were jealous of Ketley, because he made so many friends, and was so pleasant and nice, and they were willing to do anything to ruin him. But he would set himself right at the trial. He was just waiting for that. It was to come off in a week—the seventh. The bail had been set at a thousand dollars, but when they found she had but five hundred, and that there was no one else to go on his bond, they had let him go at that. Charlie was bearing up well, and so was Ethel, though she felt the disgrace of it more than she would admit, her mother was sure.

Siniard listened, raging inwardly, and continued to keep away from the house when he was apt to meet Ketley there. He heard from the other boarders of how he bore himself with his old swagger, showing an absence of all abasement, protesting his innocence on every hand, and declaring that he wanted nothing so much as the chance to vindicate himself. And once he met Ethel in the hall, and again on the street, and she had given him her customary indifferent nod, passing on without a word.

But hope—so faint as to seem scarcely hope at all—revived in him. If Ketley were guilty— He kept saying it over to himself all day, and far into the night: "If Ketley is guilty! If Ketley is guilty!"

On the evening before the day of the trial he had to work later than

usual. The sun had gone when he shut his shop and creaked down the incline. He was sorry not to be early at his supper, for he knew it meant meeting Ketley, and he felt less like it than ever to-night. But when he got to Crozier's there was no one in the dining room. It sometimes happened so, and the late comer was expected to announce his arrival by sticking his head into the kitchen. To his astonishment, that, too, was empty. No tired little landlady was setting things to rights there. The soiled plates of those who had been before him overran tables and window ledges and chairs; a pan of potatoes scorched on the stove; the coffee simmered and spluttered; the meat sizzled in the oven. He looked about curiously, and went back into the dining room, and as he entered by the one door, the girl came in by the other.

She was wild-looking and hysterical, and, brushing past him, she flung herself into a chair, crying: "It's not so. They needn't tell me it is. I won't believe a word of it. He's not gone. He'll come. He'll come!"

"Who? Who'll come?" he asked.

"Charlie. They say—oh, it's another lie to queer him with me. But they can't do it. They'll see. Something's happened to him. He hasn't run away."

"Do they say he has?" Siniard asked, and in spite of himself his heart was hammering with sudden joy.

She nodded.

He took down his cap from the peg in the hall, and came back to her, speaking very quietly. "We'll see if he has," he said—and went out.

They hunted for Charlie Ketley for four days. The police and the neighborhood said it was a shame for that poor little widow woman to have to stand for his bail; it would take every cent she had, if she sold the last thing she owned. Siniard said nothing, but he kept to the hunt, with a set, ugly jaw, going unkempt and unshaven, and staying away from Crozier's and his work; in the four days he did not once unlock the shop door.

Then, when it was certain Ketley had skipped bail, and was not in hiding anywhere about town, he climbed the steps again between the Chinese doctor's and the palmist's, and Ethel let him in. She wore a faded red wrapper, and her hair was straight. She looked only pathetic to him.

"He's gone, all right," he said.

He heard the sound in her throat, but he was glad that she did not cry, as he had expected her to. She merely nodded, as if it was what she had been forced to expect, and sent him upstairs to tell her mother, who had been in bed since the news of his flight had first come to them.

He stood inside the chamber door, twisting his hat awkwardly. The ways of the sick room were strange and uncomfortable ways to him.

"I suppose you've come to tell me it's so," Mrs. Crozier said, in the ghost of a voice from which the life was gone.

She was propped up among the pillows, wearing an old dressing gown. She looked as if the strength had all departed from her, as if she were completely undone and had no heart to try and be better. She had never been fit to wage her frightened fight against poverty. She was a woman to lean, not to support. And now she was old—how old he had not known until now.

"Yes, he's gone," he said, softening his voice to say it.

Her thin fingers clutched and intertwined. A tear slipped down her cheek, and she smiled with infinite pathos. "We always hope against hope, don't we?" she said apologetically, as she drew her hand across her eyes.

He looked away from her.

"Well," she went on presently—she had gone over this all so many times, lying here—"well, I guess I can stand it, somehow. It'll take all we've got to pay the bail—the furniture and all. But maybe Ethel can get something to do in a store. I—I didn't quite want her to clerk. I wanted her to finish her study and get a good position; it—it seems a little more ladylike, some-

how, more like her poor father'd have wanted her to do, but," with a smile that wrung Siniard's big heart, "but I guess poor folks can't afford to hold out for what's ladylike. And if I just get my strength back, we'll manage!"

This poor little remnant of a strength that was never adequate! What was it compared to the power of his great body? He asked himself the question, and came to his resolution.

"You'll not have to sell out," he said; "nor Ethel won't have to go into a shop. You can keep right on as you are. I'm goin' to settle the bail."

"You!" she gasped. "For Charlie?"

"Charlie be damned!" he cried, letting himself go the once, with a fury that made her cower in the pillows. "Ketley could hang, and I'd never lift a hand. It ain't for him, the miserable little thief, but for you. I'm not goin' to have you spend your last cent for him. I've got the money in the bank. I won't have to sell nothin' to raise it. And I'm goin' to pay it. Oh, don't make a fuss," his embarrassment waxing as her fervor. "It ain't anything. You just get well, and give me a square meal again. That's all I ask." And he shut the door noisily, and tramped down the stairs.

"Mr. Siniard!"

He looked back from the pavement toward the window of her room. She was there, holding the old dressing gown about her throat. She called down her gratitude in a voice that shook and quavered, and if her face had been a star, it could not have shone more tenderly upon him.

"Lord, what a fuss some women make over things!" he exclaimed, as he hurried away. But his own eyes were not quite clear from having looked into her misty ones.

Timidly, like a nesting bird that has once been frightened away, the feeling of warmth and hope came back to Siniard's heart, and took up its abode there. For a simple fellow, he displayed remarkable tact, keeping his





*"Don't ask me for certain, but—maybe—some day."*

love for the girl always in the background, and himself from under foot. If she wanted him she had only to say so, but she had to do that. He knew she was the kind of girl who must always have a man at hand to make himself useful to her; he never failed her, but he never bothered her. All that Ketley had done for her, he did, with not so much flourish or style, perhaps, but much more thoughtfully and kindly, and she came to laugh at him less and less as time went by, while her mother adored him; his dependable strength was just the support the poor little woman needed, his

cheer the tonic required to rouse her lagging spirit back to life.

At the end of the second month after Ketley had gone, Ethel was ready to take a position as stenographer. One offered through correspondence, and Siniard had just finished his supper when she came home from her first day in the office. Her mother had a bad headache, and had been reluctantly persuaded into going to bed. He sat beneath a high and feeble gas jet, apparently deep in an evening paper, when the girl came in, and threw off her hat with a fling. She was tired and frankly cross.

"Anybody that thinks this is a snap I've got, ought to try it," she said. "I hate it. The man is older than my father would have been—a silly old fool; but he put his hand on my shoulder to-day, and called me 'My dear,' and 'My pretty dear.' I could have flown at him and torn out his hateful old ogling eyes. But I sat meekly on, because I had to. Jobs don't grow on pepper trees."

"The cad!" he cried. "You'll not go back."

She laughed disagreeably, sinking into a place at the table.

"What'll I do? Stay at home and starve? I guess not. What do you think I've been getting ready for—to throw up the first job I got?"

"You'll come to me, and let me take care of you," he said coolly, and wondered at the control of his voice when his heart rioted so. "You'll bring your mother, and I'll look after you both. That's what you'll do."

She stared at him in some surprise, shrugging her shoulders.

"That sounds very fine, Mr. Siniard," she exclaimed, with a laugh that deepened the color in his cheeks.

"I know I can't say things like—but I mean it, and more than—"

"Stop! Don't you say a word against Charlie!" she flashed on the instant.

He stared at her in complete amazement, taking an instant to regain himself. "You needn't fly off so quick," he said resentfully. "Nobody was goin' to say anything about Ketley; but you know better than anybody else what might be said. I was only goin' to say that while I don't put things very well, I mean 'em all, and that I love you, and want to take care of you, if you'll let me. Will you?"

"Lordy, how do you expect me to answer you right off?" she parried. "You take me by surprise, and then you expect me to know what I want to do right away, without thinking about it. We'll talk about it some other day. Gracious, how strong you are!" as he swept away the dishes she was listlessly gathering up, and carried the lot of

them at once to the kitchen, balancing the big tray like a waiter.

"Strong enough for two, honey," he said simply. "Won't you be sensible, and let me try? I can't do much—not what I—what I expected to. But I can keep you out of offices where men insult you, and I can put you in a home where you don't have to take in a lot of hungry, bad-mannered fellows like us, to feed three times a day. Won't you come to me?"

She looked at him with questioning in her bright brown eyes. She was tired and disgusted with the unequal fight which she had just begun to wage, and which she hated with all the rebellious strength there was in her.

He read the look in her eyes, and pressed her for immediate answer, but she shook her head. Leaning to him, however, she just brushed her cheek against his arm, thrilling him with the adorable movement.

"Maybe, some day," she said lightly. "Don't ask me for certain, but—maybe—some day."

And paradise opened for him from that moment. He walked in it daily. It glorified his every surrounding, the small, shabby shop, the cluttered yard below, his cheap rooming house, the Croziers' rickety establishment, the very streets through which he passed. He thought of his almost depleted bank account, and smiled. Had ever man spent his little hoarded pile to such purpose? Was happiness ever bought at so low a cost?

The things that had fretted him no longer disturbed him. He looked on his environments with serene eyes. Some day he would change it all, but it could wait. He stood in his back door, and surveyed the desolate realm of his workaday world, but new visions filled his eyes. He was conscious now of the sapphire stretches of the bay and the blue of the tender sky. He whistled happily, keeping neither key nor air, but entirely unmindful of the lack of both.

He planned and he worked—most of all he did the latter, for to keep three in comfort requires trebled energy, and

he meant to keep the girl and her mother very well, indeed; better than they had ever been kept in all their stunted lives.

Every day, little Mrs. Crozier told him of new reasons for her belief that Ethel was surely coming to love him. She showed him, quite surreptitiously, dresses that the girl brought home and laid away, unmade, in their wrappings, plainly for her trousseau; and he touched them tenderly and lingeringly with his big, awkward fingers, and whistled louder than ever for days to come.

But as fall approached, he wearied of waiting.

"Honey," he entreated, "don't keep me hanging on any longer. I'm tired waiting for you. And you're white and thin from the work in the office. Why won't you come and let me take care of you?"

She tossed the big fluffy pompadour, and pouted.

"What an awful hurry you're in! Why can't you be reasonable and wait?"

"I've waited six months. That's long enough for any man to wait, without reason. I—I don't want to wait any longer."

She shot him a questioning glance from beneath her lowered lids, and played with her rings, from which the diamond had long been missing.

"Suppose I promise to let you name the day, the minute I've made up my mind: will you give me a little more time?" she asked.

He laughed buoyantly.

"That's a go," he cried. "I warn you I'll name Sunday, if you make up your mind on a Saturday."

She smiled oddly. "All right, then," she agreed, "Sunday it will be."

He was thinking of it as he finished a buggy, one evening a few weeks later; of how he loved her and appreciated her—was ever there such a dear, pretty, clever little wife for any man before?—and of all that he meant to do for her. He must furbish himself up a bit, too, he told himself, that he might be worthy of all her wedding

finery. It was not easy to keep himself spick and span in good store clothes when he was saving for the little house he meant to furnish presently, and properly maintain, but he must have at least one new suit—the one he would be married in. He was considering whether it should be blue or black, plain or striped, when, chancing to look out, he saw Mrs. Crozier, just starting up the incline.

He smiled affectionately. Good little soul! She was probably coming to him with some new trouble. The way she let him ease her difficulties with his counsel touched him. He was unspeakably pleased to be taken so completely into her confidence. He felt he ought to hasten down to meet her, as the incline made some people a little dizzy, but it needed just a stroke or two more to finish the buggy, and then he could clean his stained hands and talk to her comfortably. He brought the brush swiftly down the last spoke.

Then he sprang to meet her, giving her welcome in no uncertain manner. He dragged a chair forward for her, dusting it with a painty rag. He chatted of the disorder of the place, assuring her that he meant some day to put things to rights. The place was never attractive, he grinned, but it could look much better than it did, and he meant to have it so before—

And then he saw she was blue-white and shaking, and that, though she tried to speak, her lips only twisted piteously.

"It's the incline!" he cried, springing to the faucet to fill a tin cup for her.

But she shook the water away, when he would have put it to her lips, and he could only stand beside her, anxious and self-reproachful for letting her come up alone. She was so feeble and so frail!

She motioned him to lean down to her. The twisting lips were steadying a little. She raised her face as he stooped, and tears slipped over the rims of her stricken eyes—tears of pity, of supplication, of shame.

"She's—she's gone to Ketley," she said.



## What the Editor Has to Say

**D**O you want to read a story of American life of to-day, in which the characters are such people as you have known and met, in which there is nothing extravagant or improbable, nothing that is not a common enough occurrence in everyday life, and yet which holds you from first to last in a strong web of fascination and interest? If you do—and it is hard to imagine any one who could truthfully answer such a question in the negative—read the complete novel in the December SMITH'S by Anne O'Hagan. It is called "The Honor of the Family," and the principal character is a girl who has chosen to become a doctor. It is a story of love and finance and, above all, of human nature.

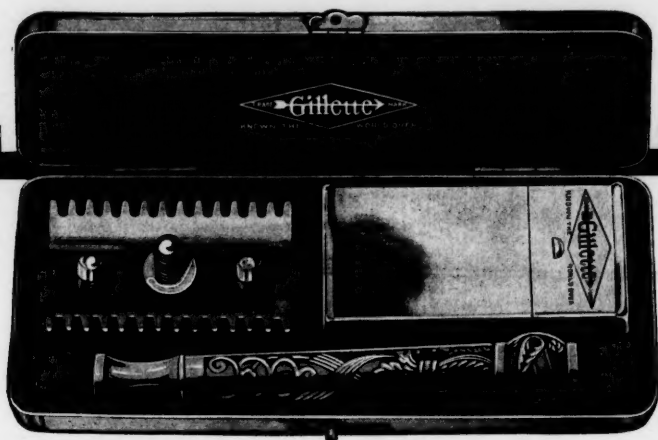
**P**ERHAPS you have heard of Grace Margaret Gallaher. Once, some time ago, she wrote a story for SMITH'S called "The Boy," which, if you have read it, you are sure to remember. We remember it, and we read more stories in the course of a month than do most people. She has written for the December number of SMITH'S another story, "Concerning Comfort," quite as well worth remembering and quite as enjoyable in the reading.

**H**OW do you like what, so far, you have read of "The Great Conspirator"? The fourth installment, which will appear next month, will be one of the largest we have pub-

lished, and will bring this great serial to an even greater climax of mystery and interest. It has been pronounced by more than one good critic to be one of the greatest stories of the kind written since Wilkie Collins' "The Moonstone."

**B**Y this time you have read the first story in the series, "My Stage, Career," by Virginia Middleton. Another story, quite as interesting as the first, and giving further details in the history of the girl who was anxious to go on the stage, will appear in next month's issue of the magazine.

**T**HEN, of course, there will be another sermon by Charles Battell Loomis, and another funny story of Maine folks by Holman F. Day. This time he will relate the adventures of "The Meetin' House That Went A-Rampagin'." There will be a delightful little story, "Some Letters and a Postscript," by Fannie Heaslip Lea; and some humorous verses by Wallace Irwin; also an interesting paper on national folk songs by Rupert Hughes. We are sorry that we have not space to tell you more in detail about the next number of SMITH'S. The present number was just a page larger than we had planned, and we could see no way of cutting anything out of it without hurting the number as a whole. If you haven't already read "Winter's Wife" and the Williamson story, we have detained you too long as it is.



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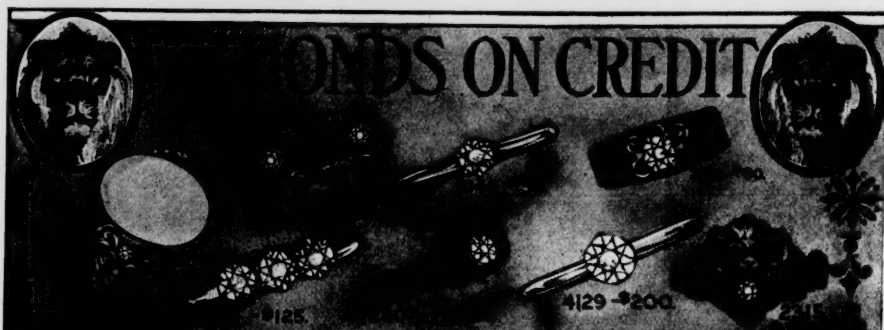
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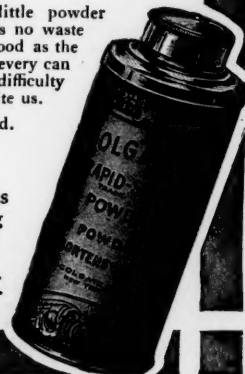
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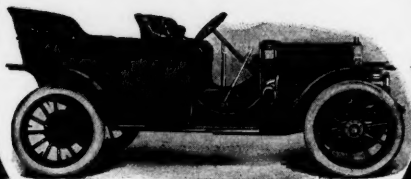
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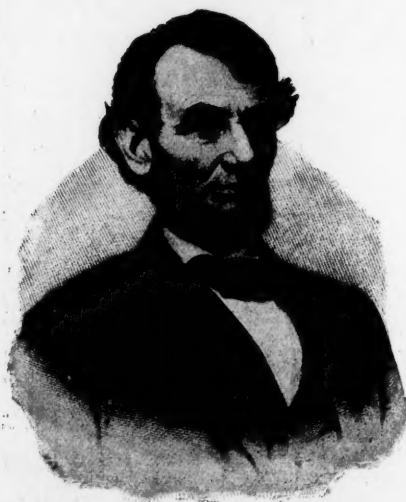
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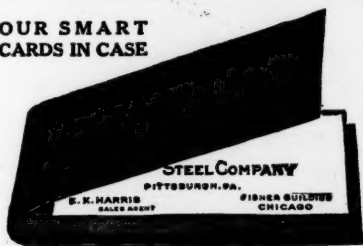
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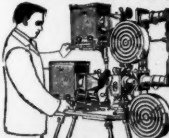
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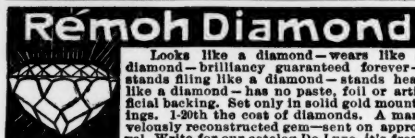


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### Demonstrated Yield—an Average \$300.00 A MONTH

Here's a piece of land—10 acres. On the other side of the fence is another piece of land—also 10 acres. The fellow who owns that 10 acres on the other side of the fence cleared \$3,600 from it last year. The only difference between the two pieces is that the land on the other side of the fence is under cultivation, and not for sale, while this 10-acre tract must be plowed and planted and is for sale by the Florida National Land Co. for \$20.00 an acre, payable \$20 a month—that's 17c a day, \$1.15 a week, or \$5.00 a month for 10 acres.

Now what does that mean to you? If you are not earning \$10.00 a day it ought to set you thinking, because if the fellow on the other side of the fence earns \$10.00 a day, why can't you—if it costs a day is all you have to pay to make it possible! And if you earn \$10.00 a day, are you sure you will earn another \$10.00 to-morrow? I don't think so, one over you with authority to say, "Hunt a new job!" No man can say, "Hunt a new job" to that fellow on the other side of the fence.

And again, if you are now earning \$10.00 a day, why shouldn't you earn \$20.00 or \$40.00. The fellow on the other side of the fence makes his average \$10.00 a day from 10 acres of land. \$20 a day will buy 20 just as productive acres as he has. \$40 a day will buy 40 acres just as productive as he has. Now, sir, this isn't just talk. If you can meet me in Florida, I can show you case after case where the fellow on the 10-acre farm next to the one I want to sell you, is clearing an average of \$10.00 a day.

But many of the neighboring growers have written their testimony, and if you can't go to Florida to see for yourself, I'll send you what they have written.

Let that rest for the moment, and I'll tell you about Florida National Land. Get a map of Florida, look right in the center of the state for Marion County, or Ocala, or Lake Wales. Now you have it. That's where the Florida National lands are—on the "Backbone of Florida," the high lake country. And scattered throughout this part of Florida, you'll find the "Show Groves" where the finest Oranges and Grape Fruit in the state are grown.

### Pay \$5.00 Down and Put in Your Crop. Money Back if You Want it in Three Months.

If you want to start right in to cultivate your land, go ahead. You can get a quick income from truck growing and make the land pay for itself, or you can set out an Orange or Grape Fruit Grove and have it getting ready to bear while you make your payments.

Now, isn't this the fairest offer you could imagine? Think of it—land that has been demonstrated to be the most productive in Florida—a State noted the world over for its Tropical Fruits, Winter Vegetables and glorious winter climate. And land in that part of Florida where the summers are also pleasant in Florida, the State where the average length of life is more than in any other State in the Union.

But enough—you either want to buy or you want more information. Use either coupon, but fill it down now and send it in. If all the land we can sell at this price is sold, I will send your money back at once, and later send you our new prices and terms before they are advertised. So don't let slip your chance for a \$10 a day income for a few cents a day. Read below what Bankers, Judges and Public Officials say about us, and mail your coupon at once.

**J. J. VORPE, PRESIDENT**  
FLORIDA NATIONAL LAND COMPANY  
396 OLD COLONY BUILDING  
CHICAGO

Now do you begin to why we sell Florida National Lands are productive of the largest per acre income of any lands anywhere, in any state in the Union. Note the splendid shipping facilities—Trunk Line Railroads at every turn.

Note the nearby towns—Lots of them. As a matter of fact, the land I want you to buy is none of it more than three miles from a railroad.

There are schools and churches and good roads too. Now what do you say?

Here is my proposition: Write your name and address on the coupon at the lower left hand corner of this advertisement. Enclose a Five Dollar Bill and send to me. By return mail I'll send you our Bond for Warranty Deed describing your ten acres. I'll also send you a book full of interesting information about Florida National Lands. If there's anything about our proposition or the provisions of our Bond which you don't like, say so before your next payment comes due, and I'll return your \$5.00 without question.

If you are satisfied, then all you have to do to put yourself in a position to earn \$10.00 a day by owning a 10-acre Florida National Farm, is to pay \$5.00 a month until you have paid a total of \$50.00 and no more—no taxes, no interest, no commission nor any other charge whatsoever.

And furthermore, make a personal inspection any time within three months. If you want your money back then, send me your Bond and say so, and I'll send back every cent you have paid without a question. Or if some other 10-acre tract is already taken up, you better see than the one you have, we'll change the description in your Bond so that it will specify the land you select.

If you want to know more about this before you buy, send me the coupon at the lower right hand corner of this advertisement, and I'll send you our book and maps, and a sample of our Bond for Warranty Deed.

But whichever you do, do it now, at once, because the land we are selling now is as good as we or anyone else has, and our present price and terms covering a limited acreage are the best we shall offer.

**J. J. VORPE, PRESIDENT**  
FLORIDA NATIONAL LAND COMPANY  
396 Old Colony Bldg.  
Chicago.

Please send me your Book of Demonstrations, Flat of Florida Lands and sample of your Bond for Warranty Deed Free and Clear, with the understanding that if my application be too late for land at these prices and terms, I am to have your next proposition before it is advertised.

PURCHASE COUPON

**J. J. VORPE**  
PRESIDENT  
FLORIDA NATIONAL LAND COMPANY  
396 Old Colony Bldg.  
Chicago.

Enclosed find \$5.00 as first payment for 10 acres of Florida National Land. Send me your Bond for Warranty Deed Free and Clear, Map and Book of Demonstrations, with the distinct understanding that you will instantly refund my \$5.00 on request, for any reason, within 30 days.

NAME

ADDRESS

TOWN

STATE

From the First National Bank of Van Wert, Ohio, Where President Vorpe Has Always Lived.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

I have personally known J. J. Vorpe, President of the Florida National Land Company, practically from his boyhood up, and I take pleasure in testifying that I have always known him as a gentleman of integrity, whose word is as good as his bond. Our business relations with him have been quite extensive and always very satisfactory. Yours truly,

F. L. WEBSTER, Cashier.

Having also personally known Mr. Vorpe for many years, I take pleasure in heartily endorsing the above.

A. B. GLEASON, President.

PURCHASE COUPON

DEMONSTRATION COUPON

NAME

ADDRESS

TOWN

STATE

What Florida Bankers, Judges and Public Officials Say

Ocala, Florida, July 20, 1909.  
For the benefit and information of those who think of investing in Florida Lands, we, the state that Marion, Lake and Sumter Counties are of the best lands in our State, and the lands owned by the Florida National Land Company, in the vicinity of Lake Wales, are especially adapted to Citrus fruits and other products. Yours very truly,

J. D. ROBERTSON, Mayor City of Ocala.

JOSEPH BELL, County Judge.

JAS. C. BOOZER, Asst. Mgr. Commercial Bank.

W. S. BULLOCK, Circuit Judge 5th Circuit of Florida.

THOS. E. PASTER, Treasurer Marion County.

S. T. SISTOUNE, Clerk Circuit Court, Marion Co.

W. A. MOORHEAD, County Surveyor.

Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."

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## What We Sell On Credit

Furniture, Carpets  
Rugs, Draperies  
Stoves, Ranges  
Silverware, Chinaware  
Pianos, Graphophones  
Lamps, Clocks  
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8 to 14 Months to Pay



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Tufted Back  
Upholstered Rocker.  
Handsomely carved, golden oak  
finish, fabricoid leather.

75c first payment, 50c monthly  
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**E-3490**  
Mutual  
Empire  
Steel  
Range



**R-5691**  
Pedestal  
Extension  
Table

Solid Oak; top 42x32 inches; ex-  
tends 6 feet; pedestal 7 inches in  
diameter; carved claw feet.

**\$1.50** first payment, 75c monthly  
payments; total price, \$9.50.

**3,000 Things for the Home** are pictured in our mammoth **Fall Catalog**. The book is **Free**. Ask us to mail your copy. Then sit by your fireside and see all the world's finest productions in Furniture, Carpets, Draperies, Stoves, China, Silverware, etc. The pictures are perfect. Some are in actual colors. It is just like coming to our six-acre store and seeing the world of new things that we have gathered to show you. To the homelover, this is the most interesting book in existence. Don't wait a moment. Ask us now for a copy.

## Only a Trifle Down

When you see what you want here, you don't need to wait for it—wait till you get the money. Send us a few cents on each dollar, and the article is sent at once. Pay the rest as convenient—a little each month. Our terms are exceedingly easy.

Enjoy the things while you are paying. No interest, no security, no extra price. We sell you on open account, without any red tape, without any publicity. We are glad to trust people who buy things for their homes.

Most city people buy all their house furnishings in this way. Our plan simply brings the same credit conveniences to every town and hamlet. We sell on credit everywhere. You can have what you want, enjoy it at once, and pay for it as you can.

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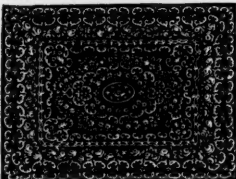
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**E-3794—Marvel Empire Base Burner**, 12-inch firepot; self-feed.  
**\$3.75** first payment, 11.50 monthly payments; price, \$24.95.



**E-3824—Victor Empire Hot Blast**, 10-in. firepot; burns all fuel.  
**75c** first payment, 60c monthly payments; total price, \$4.95.



**M-8417—Brussels Rug**, 9x12 feet. Green background; red and pink roses; highest grade.

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Back of this offer is the largest concern of its kind in existence, with a combined capital of \$7,000,000. We are selling now to 500,000 homes—more than all our competitors combined. You will know the reason when you see our prices and know our splendid methods.

## All Prices Guaranteed

On every article we guarantee a saving of 15 to 50 per cent. We guarantee to undersell any house, local or mail order, cash or credit. And we leave the decision to you. If you find any price that compares with ours, send our article back.

We are safe in this offer because our buying power is unrivaled. We are supplying hundreds of thousands of homes direct from the factories, without any middle-men's profits. We control the output of scores of factories at prices which no one can duplicate. It is utterly impossible to undersell us, and no concern will even attempt it.

Then we sell at cash prices on credit, and nobody else does that. Those who pay cash don't get a penny of discount below those who take a year to pay. That is the reason for our astounding success.

You should know all the facts—you owe that to yourself. So we ask you to send for our catalog.

## Four Free Catalogs

Our **General Catalog** pictures and describes over 3,000 new-style things for the home. It contains furniture of all kinds, rugs, carpets, draperies, and a full line of household goods except stoves.

Our **Stove Catalog** shows 70 styles of Empire stoves and ranges, costing from 85c up. These stoves are the famous fuel savers, and they pay for themselves in short order.

Our **Piano Catalog** shows all styles of the Beckman Pianos, at \$100 to \$150 below regular prices.

Our **Graphophone Catalog** shows Columbia Graphophones and records, all sold on credit.

Mark on this coupon the catalog you want, and mail it to us today. Do this now, before you forget. Then see what you get.

## Cut Out This Coupon

**SPIEGEL, MAY, STERN CO.,**  
894-35th Street, Chicago

Mail me your

\_\_\_\_\_ General Catalog \_\_\_\_\_ Stove Catalog  
\_\_\_\_\_ Graphophone Catalog \_\_\_\_\_ Piano Catalog

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Postoffice \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."

# Save Money On Christmas Jewelry

Never mind how much or how little you spend for Christmas Jewelry, you can save money on every piece of it, if you buy of us. This will be clear as daylight to you when you see our **Fashion Book of Jewelry** just published, which we will send free on request. It will give you a thousand ideas for Christmas presents. Write for it to-day. Ask for the Fashion Book of Jewelry.

Whether you buy a stickpin, a diamond locket or a blazing sunburst, when you buy of us you pay only one moderate profit.

We have many fancy patterns in jewelry but no fancy prices. Our **Fashion Book of Jewelry** tells what is done to please your taste and save you dollars by a firm of jewelers in business over 32 years, which manufactures most of its wares, imports all its diamonds and other foreign products direct, **guarantees everything**, and will return your money if you are not satisfied. Such a book is surely worth a postal card.

Any article here illustrated sent prepaid on receipt of price. Address Department B.

## LAMBERT BROTHERS, Third Ave., Cor. 58th St., New York

- 38. 14-k Masonic charm, blue enamel G.....\$7.00
- 39. 10-k polished scarf pin, 1 pearl.....\$1.50
- 40. 10-k rose finish sleeve buttons, extra heavy, chased border.....\$8.00
- 41. 10-k locket, 1 diamond, 2 ptc. stones.....\$10.75
- 42. 14-k rose finish, handy pins, pair.....\$8.00
- 43. 10-k rose finish brooch, 1 amethyst, 1 pearl.....\$5.50
- 44. 14-k LaValliere, 1 sardonyx, 1 baroque pearl.....\$8.75
- 45. 14-k rose finish tie clasp, 1 diamond.....\$7.75
- 46. 14-k brooch, 3 ruby eyes.....\$7.50
- 47. 14-k rose finish brooch, 1 pearl.....\$3.95
- 48. 10-k rose finish scarf pin, etched, 1 coral, 1 pearl.....\$2.00

- 49. 14-k rose finish LaValliere, 1 turquoise matrix, 1 baroque pearl.....\$6.75
- 50. 14-k rose finish scarf pin, 3 rubies, 1 pearl.....\$7.50
- 51. 10-k rose finish tie clasp, 1 diamond.....\$4.00



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Handiest article ever devised for repairing all kinds of inserted wood-work. Any lady or child can easily and quickly repair chair or ladder rungs or any article where one piece of wood sets in another. Saves money—Saves time and is absolutely guaranteed to give satisfaction. Sample package All dealers or write

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### A \$25,000 Book

For forty years Adler-Rochester designs have been the leading styles for men.

Our designers are the ablest men in their class. And they constantly go where men of refinement meet.

They are not theorists, not dictators of fashion. They simply foster the tendencies revealed by men of good taste.

So young men and the older have always found here the best that the best-dressed wear.

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Yet the book is free. Please ask us to send your copy.

### Not Costly Clothes

Adler-Rochester Clothes are designed by the ablest men in their line.

They are made by custom tailors of the rarest skill. They are made with infinite care, without regard to cost or time.

We spend on the making *four times* what some makers spend.

Yet our price is the price of other good makes. Our suits and overcoats run from \$18 up.

### 97 Cents Profit

The reason is this: We limit our profit to six per cent. Our average is 97 cents per suit.

All else goes into the cloth and the making—into holding our great reputation.

But we sell to one dealer in each city or town, and we sell him but part of his output. For there are not experts enough in existence to make such clothes for the many.

You cannot all get Adler-Rochester Clothes, but you can all have our Book. Write a postal today for a copy of our Book No. 11. Address

L. ADLER, BROS. & CO., Rochester, N. Y.

## **Adler-Rochester Clothes**



(2)

Sample Pages

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Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."



# In The Public Service



The President of the United States works for 80,000,000 people all the time.

He needs rest and change to keep him fit for his work, and yet he cannot neglect his official duties, he must always be within reach.

When Washington was president he rode his horse as far as Mount Vernon and kept in touch by messenger with the affairs of state. The President to-day has a wider range and can seek the cooling breezes of the New England coast.

*The long distance telephone keeps him in constant communication with the capital and the nation.*

The railroad will carry him back to Washington in a day, but usually he need not make even this brief journey. The Bell telephone enables him to send his voice

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The Bell system performs this service *not only for the President, but for the whole public.*

This system has been built up so gradually and extended so quietly that busy men hardly realize its magnitude or appreciate its full value.

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***The Bell telephone has become the implement of a nation. It increases the sum total of human efficiency, and makes every hour of the day more valuable to busy men and women.***

The highest type of public service can be achieved *only by one policy, one system, universal service.*

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Leaves with exquisite aroma.

Our own buyers in Turkey, through ancient experience, have learned where the rare leaves grow.

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